

“CUANDO ACTUAMOS, ACTUAMOS JUNTOS”:  
UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTIONS OF RELIGION,  
ACTIVISM, AND CITIZENSHIP WITHIN THE LATINO  
COMMUNITY IN INDIANAPOLIS

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## **Dedication**

To Cathy Iffland Logan  
in memoriam

To my immigrant friends, thank for allowing me into your lives over the past four years

To Damian Logan, for the continued support and encouragement

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Ryan Iffland Logan

“CUANDO ACTUAMOS, ACTUAMOS JUNTOS”: UNDERSTANDING THE  
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LATINO COMMUNITY IN INDIANAPOLIS

Undocumented immigration from Latin America is a heated and divisive topic in United States' politics. Politicians in Washington, D.C. are debating new legislation which would provide a pathway to citizenship for some 11 million undocumented immigrants. While several federal immigration reform bills were debated in the early 2000s, each one failed in either the House of Representatives or in the Senate. The Indianapolis Congregation Action Network (IndyCAN), a grassroots activist group in Indianapolis, is organizing the Latino community through faith and shared political goals. Undocumented Latino immigrants are utilizing IndyCAN as a method to influence progressive policy change. However, anti-immigrant groups challenge these efforts by attempting to define who can be considered an "American" and are attempting to block legislation due to their negative perceptions of Latinos. Debates about citizenship have racial discourses and reveal the embeddedness of race and ethnicity. Despite this, many Latino immigrants are forging their own identities in the United States and are engaging in a political system that refuses to grant them a legal status. Through an enactment of activism called *la fe en acción* [faith in action], these immigrants ground their political organizing with IndyCAN and attempt to appeal to the religious faith of politicians. I explore issues of race, political engagement, and religion in the lives of Indianapolis' Latino community. In this case study, I demonstrate that IndyCAN is acting as a vehicle through which undocumented Latino immigrants are engaging in the political process. This political involvement occurs

through religious strategies that seem apolitical yet are implicitly an enactment of activism. Ultimately, I reveal how undocumented Latino immigrants in Indianapolis are impacting the political process regardless of their legal status.

Wendy A. Vogt PhD, Chair

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## Introduction

I arrived at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument at Monument Circle in the center of downtown Indianapolis at 9:57 a.m. Although it was early May, the weather was chilly with a sputtering of rain that was just enough to make it unpleasant to be outside without getting completely soaked. As I crossed the busy roundabout and walked up to the north facing steps of the monument I saw Pablo Navaja, an organizer for the Campaign for Citizenship, with several other Latinos. Our group continued to grow as we passed out signs which read “it’s time for citizenship” with the Spanish “*es tiempo para ciudadanía*” on the flip side. Despite the weather, our circle of supporters swelled to over twenty people. The vast majority of the people were Latinos; almost all of them were immigrants. We did introductions in Spanish and English and remained gathered at the monument which was only a short walk from Senator Joe Donnelly’s office, Indiana’s recently elected Democratic senator. Prayers, bible readings, hymns, and even *Redemption Song* by the famous reggae singer Bob Marley were recited by the group. This public display of protest presents an interesting dichotomy as many of the immigrants from the Latino community present were undocumented.

Through the Indianapolis Congregation Action Network (IndyCAN) and its branch, the Campaign for Citizenship, the immigrant community of Indianapolis is engaging with politicians in order to push for the renewed immigration reform bill. The Campaign for Citizenship organized daily prayer vigils for two weeks during the month of May at the steps of the Soldiers and Sailor’s Monument Circle in an attempt to garner the political support of Senator Joe Donnelly for the new immigration reform bill. Following the passing of immigration reform bill from the Senate Judiciary Committee

into the Senate for debate, the Campaign for Citizenship implemented another set of daily prayer vigils throughout each week of June to make their presence felt to Indiana's politicians.

As these vigils at the monument continued, the oppressive heat of summer replaced the unseasonably cool weather Indiana experienced into May. Prayer vigils were increased to two vigils per day, occurring from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. with the second occurring from 4 p.m. until 8 p.m. Although we set up a covered tent to act as a shade, it offered little reprieve as temperatures topped the ninety degree mark. Nevertheless, many Latinos and immigrants continued to make their presence felt by attending these daily vigils. During the evening prayer vigils, a delegation of volunteers went to Senator Donnelly's office and attempted to meet with him to share their stories and tell him why immigration reform was so important to them as well as for the community of Indianapolis. While the air-conditioned office building was a nice break from the heat, entering the lobby of the senator's office was always a tense experience. The volunteers' request to meet with the senator was rebuffed at each visit, Senator Donnelly always seemed to be out of the office or in a meeting.

Similar events were occurring in multiple states across the United States and continued pressure was placed on politicians in Washington, D.C. Latinos, immigrants, and other supporters of immigration reform attempted to meet with politicians in the nation's capital while they debated immigration reform. This reform concerns the lives and future of undocumented immigrants whose reality many politicians know little about. As the prayer vigils continued in Indianapolis, police approached the prayer vigils daily asking to see the permit which authorized our presence at the monument. At several

vigils, this police presence would cause several volunteers to slip away, intimidating these undocumented immigrants back into the shadows. National and local social justice organizations which ground their activism in religious faith such as IndyCAN are working to correct the injustices undocumented immigrants face on a daily basis by engaging them in the political process.

Over the past three years IndyCAN, a grassroots activist organization, has worked to organize the residents of Indianapolis and engage them in the political process. Since its founding in early 2011, IndyCAN has acted as the primary vehicle through which the community of Indianapolis can engage with politicians and community leaders in order to lobby for progressive policy change. The organization describes itself on their website as:

The Indianapolis Congregation Action Network (IndyCAN) develops leadership of people of faith at the grassroots level to achieve power for positive change. Bringing people together across racial, economic, and religious lines, IndyCAN is in constant communication with tens of thousands of people across Marion County through [sic] over 20 member congregation and is deeply rooted in the stories of our people and our shared faith values.

At IndyCAN's official kick-off event in 2012 over 1,700 Indianapolis residents attended from African American, white, and Latino communities (Mundell 2012). One of IndyCAN's branches, the Campaign for Citizenship, is mobilizing the Latino community and immigrants of Indianapolis to advocate for a pathway to citizenship. Dimensions of religion, grassroots organizing, politics, and policy have taken center stage in Indianapolis as Latinos and Latino immigrants seek to influence the national immigration reform occurring in Washington, D.C. The Campaign for Citizenship is aimed at gaining the support of the larger Indianapolis community, including business and religious leaders, in order to gain political support for enacting state and federal laws which would

be pro-immigrant. Indiana currently has several anti-immigrant measures on the books, such as HB1402 which bars immigrants from receiving in-state tuition was signed into law May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011. One proposed law, SB590, which was largely a copycat of Arizona's nationally debated SB1070 failed to pass in Indiana. Nevertheless, these legislations have pushed immigrants to take charge of their situation and develop leadership from within their own communities to confront these political issues. National legislation such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), revived discussion about the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act), and recent political talk concerning an "earned pathway to citizenship" for some eleven million undocumented immigrants has stirred action throughout the Latino community in Indianapolis.

Immigration reform is a divisive topic within the realm of American politics. According to the Pew Hispanic Research Center, the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States is estimated at just over 11 million, with almost 9 million coming from Latin American countries (Passel and Cohn 2009, 2012). There are various opinions on the pros and cons of immigration reform stemming from a variety of issues including economics, racism, terrorism, nationalism, and many more. This multiplicity results in the wide variety of opinions on the new immigration reform. This new piece of legislation at the center of this thesis is called the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 (introduced in the United States Senate as Senate bill 744 or S. 744). Among the most important measures the bill would introduce if passed into law include an immediate yet temporary legal status for qualifying undocumented immigrants and an "earned" pathway to citizenship.

The backlash against this bill stems from conservative politicians and political groups. These politicians and nativist groups see the bill as rewarding those who broke the law by coming to the United States “illegally” and having a negative impact on American “values.” Furthermore, these politicians and nativist groups often have fears that the United States could become more vulnerable to terrorism and create a loss of jobs for American citizens. Many conservatives point to issues from the last major immigration overhaul carried out in the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). Although it did not grant amnesty, the IRCA ultimately allowed some three million undocumented immigrants a pathway to citizenship; it failed to address the larger structural issues which spur undocumented migration in the first place. These failures found within the IRCA are still relevant today. During a meeting with a small delegation of Campaign for Citizenship members, Indiana Republican Senator Dan Coats explained that many of his constituents want the government to step up and enforce the IRCA and not pass new legislation. While the new immigration reform would not grant amnesty to undocumented immigrants currently residing in the United States, it would present a way to achieve a legal status. Despite facets of this new bill enacting structural vulnerability, many undocumented Latino immigrants in Indianapolis are stepping out of the shadows to make their voices heard by participating in grassroots activist organizations in order to sway politicians to vote in favor of immigration reform and to win public support for their cause as well.

Indianapolis contains a smaller population of Latinos and Latino immigrants compared to other major cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. While there has been a long history of Mexican migration to northwest Indiana (Moralez 2010,

Baer 2012, Gutiérrez 2013), Indianapolis has maintained a much smaller population of Latinos and Latino immigrants. Indianapolis saw a steady rise in Latino immigrants between 2000 and 2006, with the population of Latino immigrants increasing from 33,000 to 84,000 in Marion County alone (Baer 2012). The Latino population increased statewide from 215,000 in 2000 to almost 390,000 by 2009 (Baer 2012). Different factors stimulated the growth of the Latino immigrant population including affordable housing, employment opportunities, and as a suitable location to raise a family (Littlepage 2006). Other factors include various support networks such as La Plaza, the Hispanic Center, and the Hispanic Business Council (Littlepage 2006, Baez 2012). The majority of Latino immigrants in Indiana come from Mexico but there are immigrants from Caribbean, Central, and South American countries. Historically, immigrants from Latin America were drawn to Indiana to work in agriculture and the steel mills of Gary (Moralez 2010, Baer 2012, Gutiérrez 2013). Post World War I, Eli Lilly and Company employed several Latin American pharmaceutical professionals (Baer 2012). While the population of Latino immigrants in Indianapolis and Indiana may be small compared to other areas of the United States, they are organizing and engaging in local and nationwide political movements.

Regardless as to whether they have an undocumented or low socioeconomic status, Latino immigrants are gaining a voice through grassroots organizing. This type of organizing is a powerful tool for communities who are marginalized within the larger American society due to economic status or race (Marquez 1990, Matovina 2005, Wood 2005, Zolniski 2006). For undocumented Latino immigrants, grassroots organizing has also proved to be an important outlet through which they are able to gain a voice and

advocate for positive policy change (Marquez 1990, Matovina 2001, Millard and Chapa 2004). This organizing has often been carried out through grassroots activist organizations that base their activism in religious faith (Marquez 1990, Matovina 2001, Mooney 2007, Palacios 2007, Stepick *et al.* 2009). IndyCAN and its branches have served the community of Indianapolis a vehicle through which achieving policy change is possible. IndyCAN's goals of progressive policy change harken back to the Civil Rights Movement which highlighted the contradictions between the Judeo-Christian ideals of the Constitution and Jim Crow segregation. IndyCAN utilizes seemingly nonpolitical rituals such as prayer and the sharing of testimonials as strategies to influence politicians on their religious faith. While the social justice work of IndyCAN is grounded in a shared faith, the organization does not proselytize. IndyCAN rather employs shared religious faith as a social network and to mobilize communities to effect political change. The Campaign for Citizenship has provided the Latino community with a means to become organized and come face-to-face with state and federal level politicians.

Aside from the migration and political engagement, religion is an important aspect in the lives of many undocumented Latino immigrants. Within the Campaign for Citizenship branch of IndyCAN, Catholicism in particular plays an extremely important role in the lives of many Latino members. While IndyCAN is comprised of Catholic and multiple Protestant denominations, Catholicism is the most prevalent faith within the Campaign for Citizenship branch. Scholarship has documented the importance of religion, and specifically Catholicism in the lives of Latino immigrants (Matovina 2001, Treviño 2006, Badillo 2008, Stepick *et al.* 2009, Palmer-Boyes 2010). Religious faith acts as a foundation for IndyCAN and inspires its social justice goals. This faith-based

activism is drawn along the lines of liberation theology which seeks to bring more awareness to the needs of the poor. Religion, and specifically Catholicism, is a powerful resource for the Campaign for Citizenship.

In order to understand the ways in which Latino immigrants are advocating for policy change, I organized my research around the question: how does the transformative power of activism shape the experience of marginalized populations? In this case study, I analyze how this grassroots organization is acting as a vehicle to involve undocumented Latino immigrants in the political process utilizing religious strategies that seem apolitical yet are implicitly an enactment of activism. Through this research question, my thesis reveals how undocumented Latino immigrants and the wider Latino community in Indianapolis are becoming politically engaged through the vehicles of both IndyCAN and their religious practices.

This thesis examines the intersections of religion, activism, and citizenship within the Latino community in Indianapolis. Since its inception, IndyCAN has advocated for all residents of Indiana including immigrants. I examine such issues as race, political engagement, religion, and grassroots activism. Despite the separation of church and state, IndyCAN is attempting to appeal to politicians at a religious level. IndyCAN's volunteers, including undocumented immigrants, are advocating for their rights and lobbying politicians for positive policy change. While IndyCAN is not addressing the root causes of structural violence such as neoliberal economic policies like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the organization attempts to address issues at the policy level both locally and nationally.



## *Methodology*

I first learned of IndyCAN while conducting research for my senior thesis in early 2012. In late January 2013 as I was beginning my fieldwork, I was invited to attend a Campaign for Citizenship meeting and thus became involved in the organization. The data presented in this thesis was gathered over a seven month period from February 2013 through September 2013. I collected data through key informant interviews, participant observation, and archival research. I conducted fourteen formal interviews throughout the duration of my fieldwork. I interviewed community members, clergy of Protestant and Catholic denominations, and organizers of IndyCAN. The participant observation aspect of my methodology formed a key part of my research. Inspired by engaged anthropology, I gained an understanding of the inner workings of a grassroots activist organization as I worked as a volunteer for IndyCAN. I volunteered by helping to organize and by attending Campaign for Citizenship events. Archival research was an important means for me to explore scholarly literature on the issues of religion, migration, social movements, and the Latino community of the United States.

The primary means of collecting data for this project was completed through key informant interviews with Latino immigrants, IndyCAN volunteers, religious leaders of the Catholic parishes involved with the Campaign for Citizenship, and with the leaders of IndyCAN. Six of my interviews were in conducted Spanish while the remaining eight were done in English. Interviews consisted of approximately ten questions that centered on issues of religion, social justice, activism, and immigration. Following the interviews I took extensive field notes and later transcribed each recorded interview. I used a method

of coding to interpret the qualitative data that I gathered from each interview. My quotations are either from recorded interviews or from my typed field notes. The names of people and locations have been changed to protect identities. At each event I took handwritten field notes which I then typed following the conclusion of the event. Furthermore, I conducted an extensive survey of the literature available concerning the anthropology of migration, the history of Latin American migration to the United States, as well as the force of religion in regards to social activism. This scholarly research provided theoretical frameworks through which I based my data.

Questions regarding religion revealed several insights such as its role in the lives of the interviewee, the ways in which it creates cohesion in the broader Latino community, as well as a deeper understanding of the social networks formed within religious institutions. The social justice and activism questions addressed participation in social justice issues and how undocumented Latino immigrants identify important political topics related to their status as future citizens. While the main goal of this research was to understand social justice and activism through the lens of grassroots organizing, I also asked questions regarding family, identity, and community in order to more completely understand the forces that are shaping migration from Latin America to the United States.

My research sites took place in an assortment of locations. Organizational meetings for the various Campaign for Citizenship events always occurred in a Catholic church, religious organizations, or at the IndyCAN offices. Many of the Campaign for Citizenship events I attended occurred at various parishes in the Indianapolis area as well. Prayer vigils and leadership retreats usually occurred at the Catholic churches. Many

prayer vigils also took place at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument at Monument Circle in Indianapolis. At each one of these prayer vigils, a delegation of IndyCAN members would visit Senator Joe Donnelly's office. In addition to Senator Donnelly's office, members of IndyCAN met with Senator Dan Coats and with Congresswoman Susan Brooks. I was also granted the opportunity to participate in a national lobbying event with two other IndyCAN members in conjunction with other grassroots activist organizations in Washington D.C. The weeklong event was coordinated through People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO), the national faith-based organization with which IndyCAN and many state-level grassroots organizations are affiliates. I spent five days in Washington, D.C. lobbying politicians, attending training meetings, participating in prayer vigils, and attending the Senate Judiciary Committee markup of the immigration reform legislation. One final research site was at the Eli Lilly and Company headquarters in Indianapolis.

Participant observation was a pivotal component of my research. I involved myself in various situations including Campaign for Citizenship meetings, church services and events, leadership retreats, and prayer vigils. I also worked with the Campaign for Citizenship to help plan and carry out events. I worked on the media team and my responsibilities included translating press releases from English to Spanish as well as contacting local news stations about upcoming events. In addition to my participant observation at events, I was expected to help direct people to the media for interviews and collect contact information of the reporters who were present at each event. My participant observation at these events allowed me to document the level of solidarity and the overall presence of the IndyCAN volunteers. Finally, I learned how a

grassroots activist organization operates and attempts to influence the minds of politicians through mobilizing the residents of Indianapolis.

Throughout the course of this project, I took an engaged approach to my research. I drew inspiration from the work of Dana-Ain Davis (2003), Charles Hale (2006), and Barbara Johnston (2010). I worked directly with the organizers of IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship in addition to my ethnographic fieldwork. I volunteered my time and energy into actions that did not benefit my thesis project but rather served to aid IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship. Barbara Johnston (2010) argues that a participatory action anthropology is a praxis which enables a more ethical and responsible relationship between researcher and subject. Furthermore, Johnston argues that this stance allows for a remedy to be created to whatever ill the subject is facing and allows for better implementation of a solution. Dana-Ain Davis (2003) also uses a participatory approach in her research. Davis argues for the dissemination of research in order to initiate change and expose social problems. Charles Hale (2006:97) describes activist research as “a method through which we affirm a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle and allow a dialogue with them to shape each phase of the process, from conception of the research topic to data collection to verification and dissemination of the results.” Hale also acknowledges that this stance may complicate the research collection process yet it can lead to innovations in theory. I emulated this same participatory approach throughout my research and had a direct impact on the organization and the community with whom I worked.

### *Theoretical Framework*

A central theme that emerges is the contested intersection of religion and the state. In a society whose constitution prides itself on a fundamental “separation of church and state,” in practice we see this is more much complex issue. The line separating church and state is far more blurry in the context of real life. In order to explore this grey area, I examine the way in which politics, religion, social justice, and grassroots organizing meet through several theoretical lenses. These lenses reveal how socially disadvantaged groups, such as undocumented immigrants, face situations of structural violence (Farmer 1996) which subject them to exploitation and subordination (Gomberg-Muñoz 2010, 2011; Quesada *et al.* 2011; Holmes 2013). The following theoretical frameworks help contextualize the situations undocumented immigrants find themselves in. Still, my research shows that through faith-based activism, undocumented immigrants are collectively engaging in politics as they seek to change the structural forces which seek their subjugation.

Structural violence and the resulting structural vulnerability which it installs in society sets the groundwork for the current situation undocumented immigrants find themselves in. Relegated to live in the shadows and typically exploited as a result of lacking a “legal status,” undocumented immigrants are placed in a position of powerlessness. This powerlessness is a result of a broken immigration system and immigration policies which seek to relegate undocumented immigrants to situations of exploitation. Paul Farmer (1996) explores how structural factors such as poverty, racism, discrimination, and sexism create inequality and foment injustice within society. Farmer (2001:307) states that “in short, the concept of structural violence is intended to inform

the study of the social machinery of oppression.” This structural violence leads to the enactment of structural vulnerability. One way in which structural vulnerability is enacted is through policy. Economic policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) create structural vulnerability abroad in the home countries of undocumented immigrants (Holmes 2013). I frame my understanding of past and current legislation around structural violence (Farmer 1996) and structural vulnerability (Gomberg-Muñoz 2010, 2011; Holmes 2013) to examine how these policies place undocumented Latino immigrants in precarious situations.

The concept of cultural citizenship (Ong 1996) also provides a lens with which to assess the exclusion of immigrants from citizenship and how “cultural practices and beliefs” are produced through their resistance against such discrimination. Ong (1996) redefines Renato Rosaldo’s (1994) concept of cultural citizenship to encompass cultural beliefs and practices which result out of the relationship between the state and immigrants. Ong’s (1996) redefinition of cultural citizenship allows for the consideration of demands made by those attempting to find belonging and citizenship. Furthermore, Ong (1996) also examines how race and culture play a role in policies which exclude who can and who cannot become citizens. Through IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship, undocumented Latino immigrants utilize their religious faith to create belonging among themselves and as a means to become involved in social activism. While Ong (1996) focuses on cultural citizenship, these undocumented Latino immigrants are advocating for gaining political citizenship. I reveal that, despite their structurally vulnerable position in society, many undocumented Latino immigrants are able to establish themselves economically with the support of religion and tradition and

are able to make a life for themselves in a country which refuses to grant them a legal status. These theories and concepts provide me a means to analyze and understand how the Latino community in Indianapolis is advocating for immigration reform legislation.

### *Broader Implications and Contributions*

This research contributes to the anthropology of social movements in its examination of IndyCAN, the Campaign for Citizenship and its political strategies. Intertwined in the broad group dynamics of social movements, this study illustrates the varying opinions of the participants within the Campaign for Citizenship and how they conceptualize immigration reform and its meaning differently. In the future, more research needs to be conducted with those not involved with social movements in order to reveal the deeper reasons why people do not participate in social movements. Burdick (1995:368) argues that this is a necessity in order to have a more complex understanding of the forces which hold possible participants back and how outreach by social movements can reach more people.

This case study also contributes to an understanding of how structural violence is created and enacted through policy and how groups respond to structural vulnerability. An important examination in this thesis is the strategies which IndyCAN its branch, the Campaign for Citizenship, utilize in order to effect political change. The use of religious faith as a means to organize and base common social justice goals is a facet of this organization. Through ostensibly nonpolitical actions such as prayer, *testimonios*, and *la fe en acción*, IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship attempt to effect progressive policy change. These “nonpolitical” religious enactments of activism provide a means through which marginalized populations can attempt to circumvent and overcome their

structural vulnerability. At the same time, their participation in this grassroots organization provides them with a means to effect progressive policy change thereby potentially ending the policies which enact structural violence. The examination of these religious-based political strategies contributes to the anthropology of activism and how groups develop strategies to effect political change.

My time spent with the Campaign for Citizenship contributes to the methodology of engaged anthropology and community research. My fieldwork consisted of being directly involved with the movement and volunteering my time in addition to my fieldwork. Lastly, this study adds to the field of engaged anthropology by revealing how working with the community fosters mutually beneficial outcomes for the anthropologist and the community.

### *Organization of Thesis*

The following chapters are organized around four major themes I encountered. Specifically, these chapters illustrate some of the most essential features of the immigration reform movement that is occurring in Indianapolis. Through ethnography my thesis demonstrates that many Latinos involved in IndyCAN are committed to mobilizing to achieve progressive policy change. I depict the Campaign for Citizenship in Indianapolis as a potent and effective movement organizing the community through shared religious faith. This organization seeks to influence politicians through its religious activism in addition to developing leaders within the Latino community of Indianapolis.

Chapter 1 is a literature review which provides a historical context and an overview of topics related to citizenship, vulnerability, and racism. I document the



history of the Catholic Church in the United States and its relationship with immigrations. I examine how Latino immigrants have maintained their culture through the Catholic Church. Furthermore, I explore several grassroots organizations and briefly explore their contemporaries. Lastly, I synthesize how race, legal status, and structural vulnerability are intertwined in the debate for citizenship.

In chapter 2, I contextualize the issues related to the definition of “American” and how Latino immigrants are excluded from this designation. I argue that despite claims of post-racialism in the United States, the perceived race of undocumented immigrants is another racialized discourse in the issue of citizenship. While anti-immigrant groups and anti-immigration reform politicians may state that the legislation is not about race, my research shows that, in fact, race does play a crucial part in the formulation of legislation. I also examine the role of non-immigrants’ participation in the movement and how anti-immigrant groups attempt to influence politicians. I examine past and current immigration reform legislation both at the state level and federal level through the lens of structural vulnerability. I close by examining the stories of two Mexican immigrants in Indianapolis and how they have negotiated their structural vulnerability.

In chapter 3, I reveal how IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship utilize shared religious faith to organize the communities of Indianapolis. Through this shared religious faith, events are organized and attempt to create progressive policy change. I provide background information on IndyCAN and discuss its political ambitions. The organization emphasizes forming collaborative, face-to-face relationships between politicians and their constituencies in Indianapolis. Religion acts to transcend racial, class, and citizenship barriers between the various communities involved in IndyCAN.

This unity allows for a forum among the communities as they identify important political topics and, through the vehicle of IndyCAN, engage with politicians through their religious faith. With the backing of Protestant and Catholic clergy and the organizational efforts of IndyCAN, its members find legitimacy and support in their political struggles. Chapter 3 reveals that the line between church and state is dynamic and that they are not always “separated” institutions in the United States.

IndyCAN meetings and events emphasize the motif of the *testimonio* (personal testimonial) as an act of central importance that forms bonds between the members of IndyCAN. This organization uses testimonies as strategy to gain recruits and inspire members as well as to attempt to change the minds of political leaders. Recurrent themes describe deportations, everyday hardships, splitting of families, the migration journey, fear, and the loss of educational opportunities for the immigrant youth in addition to hopes and dreams for the future. IndyCAN emphasizes that everyone has an important story to tell through telling their *testimonio*. While some Campaign for Citizenship volunteers were enthusiastic about the usage of *testimonios*, others were more ambivalent. Some interviewees felt that people’s pain is politicized when shared as a means to effect political change. In chapter 4, I argue that *testimonios* serve as an important tool which humanizes immigrants and promotes solidarity between the members of IndyCAN.

In chapter 5, I analyze the relationship between activism and *la fe en acción* [faith in action] and how leaders in the Campaign for Citizenship branch conceptualize these notions. I argue that *la fe en acción* is a particular enactment of activism that offers a more effective method of fomenting progressive policy change for Campaign for

Citizenship participants due to its foundation in religious faith. The Campaign for Citizenship attempts to sway the mindset of Indiana's politicians through *la fe en acción*. Of critical importance in this chapter is an exploration of how the organization develops leaders within the Latino community, many of whom are undocumented Latino immigrants including DREAMers between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. These leaders are mobilizing both their communities and the white community as well as spurring support for the burgeoning movement. Ultimately, *la fe en acción*, the use of *testimonios*, and prayer are utilized as strategies to influence politicians in an attempt to effect political change. Through these religious enactments of activism, IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship combine activism with religious faith.

While this thesis demonstrates a case study of how undocumented Latino immigrants in Indianapolis are engaging in politics there is still an implicit need for more research. Future research might address the ways in which the political strategies may shift based on how immigration reform is passed. Other research must examine how specific policies which address deportation and criminal justice are addressed by IndyCAN or grassroots, activist organizations. Also pertinent to the topic of social movements is how other immigrant groups either participate or do not participate in politics and how the accessibility to a community organizing group may garner or hinder participation in politics. More ethnographic data needs to be collected with the people who do not participate in social movements in order to assess the varying factors impede their participation or cause their ambivalence. I hope that this thesis will serve other anthropologists by revealing how the Latino community of Indianapolis is able to mobilize and engage in politics with religion as a vehicle for social change. Researchers

in other areas of the United States will find this data useful as they carry out ethnographies with other groups of Latinos advocating for local and national policy change.

In this thesis I illustrate how, despite issues of legality and structural vulnerability, undocumented Latino immigrants and the broader Latino community are organizing together to affect national immigration policy in Indianapolis. My findings demonstrate that many undocumented Latino immigrants are becoming politically engaged within state and federal politics. Through IndyCAN and their faith, undocumented Latino immigrants and their fellow community members are able to become connected in face-to-face meetings with business leaders and politicians. Despite their legal status, undocumented Latino immigrants are sharing their stories and attempting to make an impact on the politics of the United States. This thesis elucidates the struggles of undocumented Latino immigrants and the greater structural forces that seek to keep them in this perilous position in the United States.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Literature Review**

#### *A Brief Examination of Global Migration*

Global migration is becoming an increasingly complex issue. Anthropologist Jeffrey Cohen and co-researcher Ibrahim Sirkeci (2011) define contemporary migration as comprising of “a cultural decision, a social decision, and ethnic decision. Migration must be driven by more than the demand for labor and new forms of production” (Cohen and Sirkeci 2011:75). They develop a framework which they call a “culture of migration.” This concept encompasses social and political factors in addition to economic reasons for causing migration. Cohen and Sirkeci (2011) explore the “asymmetrical relationships” between social, political, and geographic forces which push people to migrate. The multiple, “asymmetrical” forces create the situations which propel global migration. Many immigrants coming to the United States are moving for reasons other than economic opportunity. Several causes for Latin American migration to the United States also include violence and insecurity in their home countries (Marroquín Parducci and Huezo-Mixco 2006, Hagan 2008, Holmes 2013, Vogt 2013).

While many of the Latino immigrants from Latin America in Indianapolis came for economic opportunities, many considered multiple reasons to justify their migration. Many of the Latino immigrants in Indianapolis are from Mexico and Central America. The high levels of violence in their home countries were a factor in moving. Others wanted better economic opportunities for themselves and their families, while others wanted to provide a future with more opportunity for their children. For many immigrants coming to the United States, religion acts as an important resource which permeates their lives in multiple ways. The same is true for many undocumented Latino immigrants in

Indianapolis. Religious faith lays the groundwork through which resistance to structural violence can occur through participation in a grassroots organization. Catholicism is particularly important for many undocumented Latino immigrants in Indianapolis. It provides a means to preserve and transmit cultural traditions and as a foundation to organize for progressive policy change. Despite the ultimate reasons for migrating, undocumented Latino immigrants in Indianapolis find Catholicism and religion to be important factors in their daily lives.

### *History of Latino Ethnoreligion*

Catholicism, for many of the of Latino immigrants I encountered in the Campaign for Citizenship, is more than just a faith but an extremely important resource as well. Historians have documented the multitude of ways in which Catholicism has shaped the Latino experience in the United States (Matovina 2001, Sánchez Walsh 2004, Mora 2005, Treviño 2006, Badillo 2008, Matovina 2013). Historian Roberto Treviño (2006) illustrates how Mexican Americans in Houston came to shape their identity around Catholicism and through cultural traditions. Treviño terms this phenomenon as “ethno-Catholicism” which he describes as “the Mexican American way of being Catholic (2006:4).” Furthermore, he states that:

Mexican Americans in Texas and the Southwest carried on this ethnoreligion that, in the spirit of its medieval and Indian roots, made room for faith healing and other practices deemed superstitious by clergy; favored saint veneration, home altar worship, and community-centered religious celebration that blurred the between the sacred and the secular; and tended simultaneously to selectively participate in the institutional Catholic Church yet hold it at arm’s length (Treviño 2006:4-5).

Cultivating and maintaining an ethnic identity through Catholicism allowed Mexican-Americans in Houston to resist the process of Americanization. Importantly, Treviño

(20006) states that this ethnoreligion blurred the line between the sacred and the secular. This notion illustrates the direction of future protests of the Latino community in the United States which appealed to religion as superseding the actions of the government. Other historians have explained the importance of this ethnoreligion. Timothy Matovina also writes of the importance of culturally significant religious traditions in his statement: “practitioners of public devotions like those associated with Good Friday frequently contend that the celebration of their [Latino] sacred traditions forms them as a people by keeping their religious and cultural heritage alive” (2001:66). Matovina reveals that a celebration of ethnoreligion allows the continuation of cultural and religious celebrations for Latino immigrants.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the prelates of the Catholic Church in the United States continued to see the importance of opening up the Church toward a culturally pluralistic standpoint toward the Catholic faith. Especially following the pressure from groups involved in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and the reforms of the Vatican II council, Catholic parishes began providing bilingual Masses as well as allowing traditional religious celebrations such as patron feast day celebrations as well as beginning to participate in social justice issues (Matovina 2001, Sánchez Walsh 2004, Treviño 2006, Badillo 2008). Latino immigrants were able to rely on Catholicism and the Church as a base for solidarity and as a means to organize. Latino immigrants are able to define their culture and identity through practicing Catholicism, thus invoking Treviño’s (2006) concept of ethno-Catholicism.

This shift in the American Catholic Church had to develop and change overtime. Originally, the American Catholic Church practiced a form of Americanization with their

Latino parishioners although the level of tolerance for religious cultural traditions varied per parish. This policy was enforced for all immigrant groups and lasted from the late 1800s through the early 1900s (Linkh 1975, Treviño 2006, Badillo 2008). The reforms of Vatican II (1962-1965) as well as the plethora of different civil rights movements of the 1960s helped steer the Catholic Church in a new direction. Aside from religion, shared experiences in social, legal, and economic situations have manifested solidarity in the Latino community when engaging in activism (Stokes-Brown 2009). Specifically for Latino parishioners, the Chicano movement of the 1960s helped garner parish priests as well as many prelates to side with Latino immigrants. As Latinos began to organize around social justice issues, the Catholic Church provided the moral and spiritual background for this activism (Marquez 1990). The social justice element that was spurred with the reforms of Vatican II and the Chicano movement provided a momentum which is still felt in grassroots organizing to this day.

### *History of Social Activism*

As far back as the 1920s when Mexican immigrants came to Indiana to seek work in the steel and agricultural industries in northern Indiana, they set up new parishes to practice Catholicism as they did in Mexico. It was through these national parishes that social justice organizations soon followed (Moralez 2010). These early organizations were called “mutual aid societies” which helped immigrants learn English and manage their finances (Moralez 2010). As time progress, social justice groups emerged which promoted Mexican traditions and culture. The emergence of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s also helped spur the formation of the Chicano movement in the southwestern states (García 2008). While not a purely religious movement, the Chicano



movement advocated for many issues related to Latinos and Latino immigrants in the United States. Groups affiliated with the Chicano movement such as Católicos Por La Raza and PADRES (Priests Associated for Religious, Education, and Social Rights) pressured the Catholic Church in the United States to support the social justice needs of Latino Catholics. The combination of the pressure from groups in the Chicano movement, the reforms of the Vatican II council, and liberation theology cemented the marriage between religion and social justice for the Catholic Church in the United States. The formation of grassroots organizations such as PICO and IndyCAN followed suit in this tradition.

For Latino immigrants and workers one of the most famous examples is the United Farmer Workers (UFW) union founded by César Chávez. Other migrant labor groups such as the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) helped to give a voice to Latinos in the United States (Perez Rosenbaum 1993). While groups such as UFW and FLOC advocated for the rights of Latinos workers other groups sought to gain equal rights outside of employment. The Alianza, the Mexican-American Youth Organization (MAYO), and the Political Association of Spanish Speaking Organizations (PASSO) formed in the 1960s and demonstrated the desire for equal rights by Latinos (Martínez 2005). These social justice groups were important in gaining the support of religious institutions. Social activism has historically provided a means for Latinos to advocate for positive change as well as garner the support of religious institutions.

Research has revealed the successes of groups which combine religion with social activism (Marquez 1990, Barvosa-Carter 2004, Wood 2005, Zlolniski 2006, Palacios 2007, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008). Many grassroots organizations follow the community

organizing model set up by an organizer named Saul Alinsky (Marquez 1990, Wood 2005). His eponymous model of social justice organizing, termed “Alinsky organizing,” is described by Benjamin Marquez (1990:357) as “detailed research on concerns, the development of umbrella organizations, the involvement of local churches and the use of full time professional organizers.” Alinsky first employed this model in his own organization, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). His model then spread nationally and was split among four main organizations during the 1970s. The four main organizations adapting the Alinsky model were the Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (later renamed People Improving Communities through Organizing) (PICO) in California, Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) in Texas, the Gamaliel Foundation in Illinois, and Direct Action, Research, and Training in Florida (Wood 2005). IndyCAN, as an affiliate of PICO, also follows the Alinsky model. Faith-based organizing allows for people to gather on shared values and work together to create change.

While the overarching policies of the American Catholic Church have historically not always favored immigrant groups, there has been a long history of particular Catholic parishes and other religious institutions aiding undocumented immigrants (Linkh 1975, Martínez 2005, Treviño 2006, Badillo 2008, Stepick *et al.* 2009). Principally, the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s helped many undocumented refugees from Central America find asylum in the United States (García 2005). The movement was spearheaded by religious institutions in the United States who openly broke federal law by encouraging the migration and providing of shelter for these refugees. The refugees were attempting to escape civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. However, the

Reagan Administration who backed the right-wing dictatorships in El Salvador and Guatemala refused to grant asylum to these refugees (García 2005). Granting asylum to these refugees would make the United States acknowledge the human rights abuses therefore cutting foreign aid. Even after massacres such as El Mozote in El Salvador in which between 733 to 900 Salvadorans were killed by the military (Danner 1993), the United States government continued foreign aid in the hopes of combating populist regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala. The Sanctuary Movement helped the Central American refugees find shelter in the United States while others aided immigrants in attaining asylum in Canada. The Sanctuary Movement embodies a religious reaction to government policies which it views as unjust. To many grassroots movements, these policies disregard human life and the human condition which creates a moral obligation to defy the government. “Immigrant advocacy” as described by Lane Van Ham (2009) demonstrates the work of the church and these organizations as a “sympathetic intermediary” between the immigrant and the larger society. This in turn also helps to humanize undocumented immigrants.

The New Sanctuary Movement developed out of these earlier movements. Immigrant advocacy is seen at the core of many of the organizations (secular and religious) as a means to aid immigrants. Groups such as No More Deaths and Humane Borders attempt to prevent the deaths of migrants crossing the U.S. – Mexico border by offering food, water, and medical aid along the border (Oxford 2010). According to Lane Van Ham, the New Sanctuary Movement asserts that churches act “transparently” in their aid to undocumented immigrants and, by doing so, negates the “illegality” of their actions. Grassroots organizations, with the backing of religion, have helped engage

populations of immigrants with the world of political participation. Another group, called the Samaritans, consists of groups of four volunteers (at least one Spanish speaking and one medically trained doctor) to offer aid to migrants crossing the border (Oxford 2010). Interestingly, this group grounds their activism in the story of the Good Samaritan and that it is through this “Biblical command” that they must show compassion to those in need (Oxford 2010). The Alinsky model and immigrant advocacy are important concepts which aid immigrants and both act as a means to organize for progressive policy change.

### *Religion and Cultural Preservation*

Religion and religious organizations foster cultural preservation in order to support the transnational lives of their Latino immigrant parishioners (Palmer-Boyes 2010, Alba *et al.* 2009, Cadge and Ecklund 2007, Stepick *et al.* 2009). Latino parishes which celebrate *quinceañeras* and ethnoreligious ceremonies aid to promote culture and transnational ties (Palmer-Boyes 2010). Through Catholic parishes in the United States, Latinos are able to maintain their ethnoreligious traditions as cultural celebrations can be carried out. Furthermore, religion is utilized in two separate ways: institutionally and as a system of meaning (Alba *et al.* 2009). This distinction is important as many immigrants turn to religion to face the challenges of everyday life and not solely on Sundays. Stepick *et al.* (2009) describe how religion and religious traditions in Miami allow for immigrant groups to reinforce cultural norms and maintain transnational ties in their home country.

Religion is also understood as a lens to understand immigration as well as immigrant’s understanding of the country they now reside in (Gálvez 2010). Reinforcing this notion, anthropologists and sociologists are continuing to show the strong influence

of religion from when immigrants make their initial migration journey and throughout their lives in the United States (Smith 2006, Hagan 2008, Stepick *et al.* 2009, Gálvez 2010, Palmer-Boyes 2010). Hagan (2008) describes the contemplation and guidance priests of both Catholic and Protestant faiths offer to Central Americans before migrating. Hagan (2008) reveals how religion fortifies migrants' willpower during their journey to the United States through religious devotions called *promesas*. Furthermore, this claiming of space in Catholic churches and during public religious events plays on the notion of cultural citizenship. Diaz-Barriga (2008) contests that cultural citizenship is demonstrated in religious festivals to La Virgen de Guadalupe which instead of showing difference to mainstream America, rather shows belonging and respect to the Latinos who are participating by creating their own space of belonging. There is no doubt that this ethno-Catholicism has functioned as a means to maintain and foster the traditions and culture of Latino immigrant populations in the United States as it does to this day.

For a group of Mexicans in New York, the religious feast for their patron saint, *Padre Jesús*, allows them to connect with their hometown of Ticuani, Mexico (Smith 2006). Spanning two weekends in January, Ticuani Mexicans celebrate *Padre Jesús* in a mix of religious and secular celebrations (Smith 2006). For other groups of Mexican immigrants in New York, *guadalupanismo* (devotion to *La Virgen de Guadalupe*) can transcend class, gender, ethnic, and legal status according to anthropologist Alyshia Gálvez (2010:89). Joining *comités guadalupanos* (Guadalupan committees) provides many Mexican and some non-Mexican immigrants to adapt to life in the United States through this form of religious devotion (Gálvez 2010). Other religious celebrations such as *el Viacrucis* (Stations of the Cross) can forge a collective religious identity among

Latino immigrants (Gálvez 2010). Additionally, religious celebrations give the opportunity for the transmission of culture and traditional values to the next generation (Smith 2006, Gálvez 2010, Palmer-Boyes 2010). The celebration for *Padre Jesús* not only connects the immigrants from Ticuani, Mexico with their home town, it also exposes their children to cultural traditions (Smith 2006). Religion and traditional rituals are important for Latino immigrant parents when raising their children in order to instruct them in their cultural heritage (Smith 2006). These case studies (Smith 2006, Gálvez 2010) highlight the importance of religion as a vehicle through which they can maintain and transmit their culture. Cadge and Ecklund (2007) seek to understand the aspect of “lived religion” and the positive changes it can incur on the everyday lives of immigrants. The notion of lived religion is important especially as immigrants attempt to affect policy change as they combine activism with their faith.

Allowing these cultural celebrations is integral to fostering a relationship of mutual respect between immigrants and clergy. This also reinforces the immigrants feeling welcome in the spaces which religious institutions occupy. Finally, the religious institution provides a gathering place where immigrants can experience belonging and acceptance (Stepick *et al.* 2009, Moralez 2010, Palmer-Boyes 2010). Furthermore, the religious institution can act as a base for the development of various groups which help immigrants in the United States (Smith 2006, Gálvez 2010, Palmer-Boyes 2010). These groups vary in topics from promoting tradition and culture to groups which offer a means to deal with the stress of migration and life in a new environment as well as activist groups which seek to foment political change. Grassroots organizations are important

groups through which marginalized populations can attempt to affect policy change.

IndyCAN is just such an organization grounding their work in religious faith.

### *Religious Institutions and the Impact of Grassroots Organizations*

Historically, religious institutions have been ever present in improving the lives of undocumented Latino immigrants. Following the close of the Mexican-American War in 1848, approximately half of Mexico's territory was ceded to the United States. Along with this land aggrandizement came with it were many Mexican Catholics. After the expulsion of the Mexican clergy from the region, Catholic prelates in the United States requested European clergy from the Vatican. By the 1850s, European as well as American clergy began ministering to the Mexican Catholics in Texas and the southwest territories. Some priests pushed very harshly for a quick "Americanization" of their Mexican American parishioners (Odem 2004, Mora 2005) while others were more supportive of the cultural-religious practices of the Mexican American Catholics (Treviño 2006, Badillo 2008, Matovina 2013). Beginning in the 1940s and 1960s, white bishops in New York, Chicago and San Antonio began opening up to cultural pluralism and discovering more about the social needs of their new Latino parishioners (Treviño 2006, Badillo 2008). Perhaps most famous is Father Carmelo Tranchese who came from Italy in 1932 in order to minister to Mexican Americans in San Antonio. Father Tranchese worked with Eleanor Roosevelt to pass a housing project for Mexican Americans. He along with Father Juan Lopez, one of the few ordained Mexican Americans at that time, established the Catholic Relief Association in 1931 as a resource for immigrants (Badillo 2008). Other bishops, such as Robert Lacey, worked at getting Spanish accepted in the parish as well as forming the Bishop's Committee in 1945 in order to better specify the

needs of Latinos (Treviño 2006, Badillo 2008). Especially following the theological reforms of the Vatican II Council (1962-1965) priests began learning Spanish and working more in tune with the Latino communities. In addition, the development of liberation theology in Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s had a strong impact on the social justice issues in the Catholic Church. The concept was termed “liberation theology” by a Peruvian priest named Gustavo Gutiérrez who wrote a book over the subject. Although liberation theology was denounced as “Marxist” (García 2005:165-166) it still had an impact on many social justice minded priests in Latin America and in the United States. Liberation theology advocated for a focus on the needs of the poor rather than catering to the needs of the rich. Many poor and disadvantaged populations in Latin American and the United States found this philosophy rung true with their situation and adopted it as a means to seek equality and justice. In this way the Catholic Church in Latin America and other churches in the United States began to focus more on the social justice needs of their immigrant congregants.

The Catholic Church in the United States has long history of social justice activism. While originally the Catholic Church in the United States took to a policy of Americanization toward immigrants (Linkh 1975), there were often sympathetic clergy who saw to the needs of their immigrant populations (Treviño 2006, Badillo 2008, Matovina 2013). Emphasizing the importance of the Vatican II reforms Badillo (2008:145) writes “the Second Vatican council had allowed parish communities to deal with broad social justice issues and become more active in leadership in church activities and programs, including parish councils and liturgy committees, and these reforms have facilitated Mexicano participation.” The work of activist priests and prelates stems to



their solid involvement in Latino struggles throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century in the United States. Following closely with the reforms of the Vatican II Council and supplemented by the philosophy of liberation theology, churches became a place in which ideas could be facilitated towards solving social justice issues. As activist organizations began to flourish in the late 1960s and 1970s; the movement helped integrate liberation theology into the immigrant rights issues (Badillo 2008). Other organizations are working towards helping immigrants to gain a legal status and get registered to vote. These religious organizations are able to successfully lobby for the rights of immigrants and are having a direct impact on the larger church administration (Kotin *et al.* 2011). The idea of becoming familiar with the political processes will help to open the doors to systemic change (Davis *et al.* 2010). The Salvadoran American National Association (SANA) is working towards the gaining the right to vote for immigrants. By combining culture with bi-nationalism, SANA is conducting an effective means of creating a new class of immigrant citizens who are able to function in their new environment while maintaining their original cultural ties (Kotin *et al.* 2011). In this manner, SANA is attempting to create a long term political engagement of its members by registering them to vote while participating in social activism. In Indianapolis, La Plaza and the Hispanic Business Council are providing avenues and resources in order to help Indianapolis' burgeoning Latino immigrant population. Grassroots organizations, such as IndyCAN, are working towards similar goals as groups like SANA by fostering immigrant citizens who are aware of their situation while maintaining their cultural heritage. Many grassroots activist organizations and religious institutions have worked

together to create an environment which brings communities together and engaged in politics.

### *Structural Violence, Citizenship, and “Race”*

Anthropologists have revealed how undocumented immigrants face a lack of accessibility, exploitation, and discriminations mainly due to their “legal” status vulnerability (Quesada *et al.* 2011, Holmes 2013). Structural violence (Farmer 1996) is implicit in many state and federal policies which deny undocumented immigrants a means to get a legal status. Farmer (1996) also describes structural violence as poverty, racism, and sexism which is institutionalized. Particularly relevant to this thesis is how structural forces such as policies enact the structural vulnerability of undocumented immigrants. This structural vulnerability is also found within workplace environments (Gomberg-Muñoz 2010, Gomberg-Muñoz 2011, Holmes 2013). As undocumented immigrants face increasing marginalization due to their structural vulnerability, greater disparities will be produced within this population. Racialized notions regarding citizenship attempt to keep Latino immigrants and other immigrant groups from achieving citizenship. While the conservative groups, politicians, and certain media outlets may attempt to designate Latinos as “other” due to their perceived race or potentially being an undocumented immigrant, Latinos are broadening the definition of race and ethnicity.

Research has shown a shift in Latino populations in the United States that are identifying as “Latino” or “Hispanic” instead of choosing categories as “black” or “white” (Stokes-Brown 2009). Interestingly, Stokes-Brown states that “this suggests that for a growing number of Latinos, the category that is categorized by the U.S. government

as an ethnic identifier is also a racialized category” (2009:1292). Furthermore, her research reveals that Latinos racially identifying as “white” believe that change can occur through political engagement whereas Latinos racially identifying as “black” are more suspicious of political engagement. Stokes-Brown’s research also elucidates how Latinos often consider themselves coming from more than one racial background which does not fit with the dichotomy of “black” or “white” racial heritage. In addition, socio-economic levels can have varying effects on political engagement per Latino ethnic group (Stokes-Brown 2009). Finally, Stokes-Brown’s (2009) research shows that Latinos identifying ethnically as “Mexican” are actively engaging in political events despite nonelectoral participation. Religion and church attendance were also cited in her assessment as critical components in the political engagement of Latinos.

Anthropological debates swirl around the issues of citizenship and race. The U.S.-Mexico border became increasingly militarized following the events of 9/11. Nicholas de Genova (2009) describes the 2003 Freedom Ride conducted by Latino immigrants protesting for immigration reforms. De Genova (2009) makes the designation that while African Americans protested against racial laws and a position of “subordinate citizenship,” Latino immigrants faced deportation and a complete “absence of citizenship.” Furthermore, de Genova (2009) explains that raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at work places reinforce the “deportability” of undocumented immigrants. He emphasizes that while some numbers of immigrants are deported, the ones who remain are subjected to an indefinite people of sustained “legal vulnerability” (de Genova 2009:456). In this sense, de Genova reveals the exploitation immigrants may face as an employee in addition to their deportability which keeps them

in a disadvantaged position in society. He explores the issue further by stating that while there is large scale recruitment of undocumented immigrants as a source of labor, their “illegal” status allows them to function as “tractable labor” (de Genova 2013:1181). This illegality also comes to encompass terminology used to describe undocumented immigrants. Anthropologist Alyshia Gálvez (2010:17) explains that the use of the term “illegal alien” functions to dehumanize undocumented immigrants. Thus, undocumented immigrants’ “illegal” status is applied by the state not only to their condition but as a way to define their identity.

Anthropologist Gilberto Rosas (2007) describes how several Chicanos (usually a person of Mexican descent who grew up in the United States) faced harassment from police officers due to their dress and appearance along the border between the United States and Mexico. Rosas explains that police attempting to distinguish between immigrant and Chicano is “blurring the boundaries between immigrants and racialized citizenry” (2007:97). This racialized citizenry is played up in the media as it attempts to mark the racial debates of citizen and what an American citizen should look like. Racialized ideas about citizenship and the position of immigrants also permeate into the workplace. Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz (2010:298) explores how Mexican workers are part of a “racialized” immigrant category and thus must work in the lowest paid jobs. Most importantly, she critiques immigration policies as “not stop[ping] labor migration; rather, they generate inequality among the labor force by assigning illegal status to a segment of the working class” (Gomberg-Muñoz 2010:303). Latino immigrants face a racialized form of citizenship which denies them rights and thus allows for their exploitation. These illustrations of Latino immigrants as not worthy of citizenship allow their structurally

vulnerable position to continue while their “deportability” attempts to keep them stuck in a situation with little or no rights.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Defining “American”: Race, Citizenship, and Structural Vulnerability**

In early August 2013, I was informed by my friend and a Campaign for Citizenship organizer, Pablo Navaja, that Congresswoman Susan Brooks would be holding a town hall meeting and he wanted me to be part of the Campaign for Citizenship group that was going to the hearing. I agreed to go and joined a group of six other Campaign supporters headed to a library in a suburb of Indianapolis where the town hall meeting was to be held. Along the way, Navaja warned me that there would be members of Indiana Federation for Immigration Reform and Enforcement (IFIRE) at the meeting. IFIRE is a nativist group lobbying Indiana’s senators and representatives to oppose the current immigration reform. Upon arriving, our group learned that the format had been changed from a town hall meeting to one-on-one, one minute meetings with Representative Brooks. We later discovered that the change had been made because Brooks’ staff had learned that IFIRE members would be at the event and they had been known to be disruptive at previous town hall meetings.

While waiting for Representative Brooks to arrive, one IFIRE member handed out anti-immigration reform fliers to all of the “white” people in the room. I was given a flyer even though I was associating with the Latinos and other white supporters of the Campaign for Citizenship. The fliers had statistics showing negative economic factors associated with immigration reform as well as racially-tinged language when referring to undocumented immigrants. The form espoused political vitriol such as “Amnesty of 12-20 million illegals = a permanent democrat [sic] majority!!!” and “Amnesty or America? Choose One. Lose the Other.” Shortly after receiving the forms, I went into the room to speak with the congresswoman. The congresswoman gave me a rather vague yet

unsurprising answer that the House of Representatives would not be taking up the Senate bill (S.744) but would rather be “exploring” the bill as multiple pieces of legislation.

Following our meetings with the congresswoman, Navaja asked me to speak with one of the IFIRE members to learn more about their stance on immigrants and the current immigration legislation. I agreed and adopted a guise that I was a student who wanted to explore both sides of the immigration reform. I first approached an elderly IFIRE member and asked to elaborate more about the flier he handed me earlier. He spoke rather abstrusely and rambled on about news reports he had seen which portrayed undocumented Latino immigrants as criminals. Soon thereafter, another IFIRE member who appeared to be in his late thirties, expressed to me that he was concerned with “fairness” to other “Americans” and that “American culture” was being put down for “immigrant cultures.” This man explained to me that he thought it was unacceptable for immigrants to come to the United States, wave around a “Mexican flag,” and demand immigration reform. As several other IFIRE members came to where I was speaking with the two men, the Campaign for Citizenship group came down the hallway. Navaja peered around the corner and made eye contact with me, seemingly worried to see me surrounded by several IFIRE members. Another IFIRE member, an older woman, looked at me and the other men and whispered to us “shh, be quiet, *they* are over there. The *enemy* is over there.” Shortly thereafter, I felt my phone vibrate and saw a text message from Navaja which read *viejo, ya nos vamos!* [dude, we’re leaving!]. I quickly excused myself and turned down the IFIRE members’ offers to have me join up on the spot. I met up with the Campaign for Citizenship group to let them know about my conversation.

Politically conservative, anti-immigrant groups have led the charge against the immigration legislation at both the state and national level. IFIRE, NumbersUSA, and The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) are several nativist groups fighting against immigrants and immigration reform. While these groups' names appear to be rather harmless and ambiguous, these organizations employ racially and politically charged language such as "illegals" and "aliens" to describe immigrants. Anthropologist Nicholas de Genova (2013:1192) explains that "the generic figures of 'immigration' and 'foreignness' suffice to reanimate race in terms that commonly, and perhaps increasingly, are articulated as nation – in terms of the 'national' identity of the 'natives.'" De Genova (2013) articulates that it is the focus on the perceived differences between the "natives" and the immigrants that gives rise to the politics of nativism.

While these groups may deny any slant of racism, their position is nothing but that which espouses racism (de Genova 2013:1193). Furthermore, de Genova (2013) deconstructs these groups' nativist, "non-racist" stance stating that "rather, their nationalism is itself overtly and unabashedly exclusionary, and it enunciates an anti-immigrant racism even as it may disarticulate race as such" (1193). It is precisely this focus on "disarticulating" racism that makes these groups so dangerous. While these groups emphasize that race is not the issue with immigration reform, there is implicit concern that race is a central focus of immigration reform. Pairing citizenship with race, anti-immigrant groups and extreme conservatives attempt to define who can be described as an American and who cannot. In these attempts to establish who can be considered an American, undocumented immigrants have become a racialized population that anti-immigrant groups seek to bar from attaining citizenship. I argue that despite claims of



post-racialism in the United States, the perceived race of undocumented immigrants is another racialized discourse in the issue of citizenship.

### *Conceptualizations of Race, Citizenship, and Immigrants*

As undocumented Latino immigrants negotiate their position in the United States, they often encounter various forms of discrimination. Some of these discriminatory practices range from “driving while brown” (i.e. being pulled over for any slight mistake) to being unjustly questioned by police based on skin color. Attempts have been made in state-level policies to legitimize racial profiling or, in some cases citizenship profiling, such as Arizona’s SB1070 and Indiana’s copycat bill, SB590. Undocumented Latino immigrants in Indianapolis are faced with these forms of discrimination as they advocate for their rights. There are multiple forces at work playing against the perceived racial and ethnic differences of undocumented Latino immigrants. While nativist groups attempt to separate themselves and “white Americans” from immigrants in general, their position could be contested. Is there a difference between Americans of Irish descent waving flags of the Republic of Ireland on St. Patrick’s Day or “insert European ethnicity”-fests compared to Latinos waving the flag of their country? It is apparent that the perceived race of undocumented Latino immigrants is at work in creating disdain for this population.

Historians have revealed it was once believed that groups such as the Irish, Italians, Germans, and many others were incapable of assimilation in to American society (Goodman *et al.* 2012:48). Racial caricatures of Jewish, Irish, and Italian immigrants are not hard to find in the political cartoons of newspapers from the 1800s. These same racial suspicions are being cast on undocumented Latino immigrants and work to separate an

ethnic or “racial” group as the “other.” When these groups possess this designation of “other,” nativist groups work to exclude these groups from being considered “American.” Anti-immigration groups illustrate how pervasive an idea such as “race” truly is when defining who is an American. These groups claim that undocumented Latino immigrants are a threat to “American society and culture.”

FAIR is registered as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, non-profit organization despite its designation by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group. FAIR and other anti-immigration groups rely on scare tactics to rally anti-immigrant support. These organizations often describe the United States as a white, Protestant nation. They believe that immigrants want to destabilize and assert their authority over “white America.” The members of these organizations also believe that immigrants refuse to integrate into American society, refuse to learn English, and live on welfare or participate in crime. Still, research has shown many of these claims are false and, in fact, are quite opposite (Dowling *et al.* 2012) and especially in the younger generations. Other national groups include NumbersUSA, ProEnglish, and the American Immigration Control Foundation (AIC Foundation) are also attempting to influence legislation and mislead the public about immigration reform.

One of the most recent attempts at misleading the public nationally occurred in May 2013 when The Heritage Foundation, a national conservative think tank, published a report entitled “The Fiscal Cost of Unlawful Immigrants and Amnesty to the U.S. Taxpayer” by Robert Rector and Jason Richwine. The report argued that the cost of immigration reform would approximate to \$5.3 trillion dollars (Rector and Richwine 2013). Shortly after the report was published, Jason Richwine’s dissertation surfaced

which focused on correlating intelligence with race. Most controversially, he argued that immigrants have a lower intelligence quota (IQ) than all “races” except African Americans (Richwine 2009). Richwine’s dissertation attempted to correlate phenotypic variation with intelligence. Biological variation does not impact intelligence between races (Goodman *et al.* 2012) and also ignores the cultural biases present in IQ tests (Gonzalez 1974, Wicherts and Dolan 2010). While the Heritage Foundation formally cut ties with Richwine, the impact of such racist propaganda stirs parts of the American public to try to define what it means to be an American.

These sorts of reports inevitably influence anti-immigrant groups at the state level as well. Much as the same way de Genova (2013) describes nativist groups, IFIRE takes a “non-racist” approach toward immigration reform. Founded in 2004, IFIRE states on their website that “it’s not about race; it’s about numbers” yet also uses racially charged language by stating that “an army of illegal aliens including criminals, drug smugglers and terrorists is invading our country.” Terminology applied to undocumented Latino immigrants can be construed as problematic, especially as anti-immigrant groups attempt to create an environment of exclusion in the United States.

### *Exclusion and Terminology*

The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are socially constructed designations which lump a diverse group of people from south of the United States-Mexico border as one homogenous “race.” Although Hispanic and Latino are often used as interchangeable terms, academia has preferred the latter over the former. Still, these terms present problems and are overall lacking for the variety of background they attempt to encompass. This problem is similar to such terminology as Native American and

American Indian which are used in order to refer to the people encountered in North and South America by European explorers. In reality, both terms are crucially lacking in representing the diversity of the people south of the United States and Mexico border. There are populations in Latin American whom descend from African, Asian, European, Jewish, and other origins. Overall, the diversity of Latinos is representative of a history of colonization, immigration, and *mestizaje* [intermarriage between different groups of different descent]. While the creation of *mestizaje* is contested between fact and fiction (Gutiérrez Chong 2008), it is still indicative of extremely diverse backgrounds of populations from Latin America. Terms such as “Latino” and “Hispanic” can create exclusion within the wider American society by acting as a means to label someone or a group of people as not “American” but as an “other.” The hyphenated status of “Mexican-American” or any “*nationality*-American” provides a possible distinction between what is considered an “American” versus “non-American.” These terms serve as a label for anti-immigrant groups to generate exclusion between undocumented Latino immigrants and “white America.” Moreover, this kind of terminology can reinforce the racialization of citizenship by creating a group of “others” through such labels as “aliens” and “illegals.” These terms are based on the “alien” (i.e. foreignness) of these immigrants and the “illegal” nature of their residence (i.e. not allowed to be in the United States by law). This terminology which is applied to undocumented Latino immigrants sets up an exclusionary environment that seeks to keep them from citizenship based on their perceived possession of an inherent otherness.

### *Race and Structural Vulnerability*

The remarks made by the IFIRE members at the meeting with the congresswoman are telling. The members I spoke with seemed to be very concerned about criminals and a loss of “American culture” to immigrants. Additionally, the members were fearful of several issues including the number of immigrants that would be granted citizenship, the economic impact of immigrants, and how jobs would be “stolen” by immigrants. These sentiments were also voiced by passersby at prayer vigils who shouted “come back when you have your papers” or “learn English!” The perceived race of Latino immigrants seems to be at the forefront of their arguments against immigration reform. The disdain expressed by IFIRE members toward Latino immigrants celebrating their ethnic heritage seems troubling since there are festivals for European ethnicities such as Irish, Scottish, and German every year in Indianapolis. Additionally, people who fear immigrants because of their supposed proclivity to crime is unreasonable as many undocumented immigrants will do all that they can to avoid causing crime in order to not draw police attention to themselves (Holmes 2013:37). One Campaign for Citizenship volunteer and immigrant from Mexico, Hector Pérez, gave told me his opinion of these anti-immigration lobbyist groups. Pérez stated:

*Tienen [los grupos anti-inmigrantes] una idea muy errónea y equivocada... They (anti-immigrant groups) have a very wrong and misguided idea... they think we (the immigrants) come here, steal their jobs, get on welfare, and all that. I don't think so!*

Pérez further elaborated that immigrants are not coming here to get on welfare or steal jobs. Groups such as IFIRE continue to perpetuate false notions about immigrants and their reasons for coming to the United States. The media can also be faulted with reports on undocumented immigrants causing crime or that the U.S.-Mexico border is a porous

border through which terrorists can penetrate easily. The definition of an American to IFIRE members seems to be relegated to someone possessing white, European descent. Still, the ways in which Latino immigrants conceptualize their own identity may be surprising to IFIRE and other anti-immigration groups.

Javier Torres is a thirty-four year old immigrant from southern Mexico. His motive for coming to the United States encapsulates the essential reason many immigrants come to the United States.

*Yo vine que buscando una oportunidad. En nuestro país hay pocas oportunidades...no hay muchas oportunidades. Las oportunidades que yo buscaba, aquí las encontré.*

[I came seeking an opportunity. In our country there are few opportunities...there are not many opportunities. The opportunities that I sought, I found them here]

Additionally, he described himself humbly:

*No soy algo especial, solo soy un hombre, una persona con necesidades, con un sueño, con muchas ganas de ayudar a mi familia también.*

[I'm not anything special, I'm just a man, a person with necessities, with a dream, with a strong desire to help my family also].

Torres informed me that he is the only *hispano* at his job and therefore works extremely long hours to make sure that he will not jeopardize his employment. Torres has achieved very much over the past eleven years he has been in Indiana. He has steady work, rents a house, and goes to the Indianapolis 500 race every year for the past six years; something he dreamt about while still a child in Mexico listening to the race on the radio.

Still, Torres faces an uncertain future in the United States yet feels very strongly for the country which refuses to give him a legal status. Unperturbed by this, Torres described to me in English how he feels: "I am not resident, I am not citizen but I have an opportunity and I take it because in my country, in Mexico, I don't have that." Torres

crossed into the United States and made a life for himself. While he is still proud of his Mexican heritage, he feels very strongly for the United States. Groups such as IFIRE and FAIR are attempting to create a definition of American as coming solely from European descent. These groups are quick to cast aspersions on undocumented immigrants and label them as “illegals, aliens, criminals, terrorists” and, overall, as “non-Americans” yet Torres displays the example which resonates with many, if not all, immigrants; they are in fact Americans and define themselves in this way. Despite all of this, Torres stated to me “I love *Estados Unidos* because the door is open for me.”

Other immigrants share Torres’ story and understanding about their position in the United States. Hector Pérez was born to a family of eight at a ranch in rural, northern Mexico. Pérez realized that he had few opportunities in Mexico while he was growing up. Pérez began working on his father’s ranch when he was only eight years old, leaving him with little time to pursue an education.

*Yo iba a la escuela una semana y la otra semana [yo trabajaba] en el campo. Quince días [yo trabajaba] en el campo, una semana en la escuela...mi hermano y yo mirábamos que no había futuro. Yo no quería ser como mi papa.*

[I used to go to school one week, the next week (I worked) in the field. (I worked) Fifteen days in the field, one week in school...my brother and I saw that there was no future. I didn’t want to be like my dad].

Due to his family’s living situation which forced his lack of accessibility to education, Pérez likely would have been fated to working on the ranch scraping out a living. The cycle would likely have repeated itself had he started a family as well. Upon entering the United States, Pérez faced discrimination due to not understanding English. Still, he was able to learn English by taking night classes which bettered his living situation immediately. Similarly to Torres, Pérez was able to lead a very successful life in the

United States. He was able to get his citizenship and start a family. Pérez has been able to find opportunity and would define himself as much as an American as he would a Mexican. Both Torres' and Pérez' stories illustrate the structural violence they faced in Mexico and once arriving in the United States. In Mexico, the lack of economic opportunities forced them to seek employment in the United States. Structural forces in the form of scarce economic opportunities and violence are primary motivators for undocumented migration from Latin America. While anti-immigration groups and hardline conservatives are quick to label Latino immigrants as non-Americans, some Latino immigrants themselves feel as though they are Americans and have been successful in making a life in the United States. While some Americans may not be sympathetic to the reasons why immigrants come to the United States, others support immigrants in their decision to migrate.

Undocumented Latino immigrants have found support from many Catholic priests in Indianapolis who are sympathetic to the reasons undocumented immigration is occurring. Father Walker further explained to me why he is sympathetic toward the plight of undocumented Latino immigrants and why they come here:

I'm not saying that people coming here illegally was right, but I can understand why people would come here because I've traveled. I think a part of the problem is that a lot of Americans haven't traveled enough to see the situations, the conditions of other countries, and to understand why people would want to flee those countries to come to the United States; there's more opportunity here.

Father Walker's statement also explains his belief in why some Americans are not sympathetic toward undocumented Latino immigrants coming to the United States. While he did not touch on any racial or ethnic reasons for many people's negative stances toward undocumented immigrants, he did explain a universal theme in undocumented



immigrants stories; the search for opportunity. Father Walker's understandings of the conditions migrants flee from are indicative of structural violence that the undocumented Latino immigrants faced in their home country. Many Latin American immigrants faced levels of extreme violence as a motivator for migrating to the United States (Mahler 1995, Chavez 1998, Marroquín Parducci and Huezo Mixco 2006, Hagan 2008, Vogt 2013). Members of the Latino community of Indianapolis were not an exception to this violence. Other undocumented Latino immigrants faced extreme lack of opportunity. Overarching neoliberal economic policies such as NAFTA created a vacuum of economic opportunity for now undocumented Latino immigrants who seek work in the United States. Upon arriving in the United States, their structurally vulnerability is still an issue as immigration policies place them in a situation of exploitability and inequality.

#### *Enacting Structural Vulnerability through Immigration Policy*

Policies toward undocumented immigrants have made immigrants trying to advance their social position in the United States especially hard. Proposed legislation such as the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 attempted to criminalize undocumented immigrants by turning their presence into a felony (de Genova 2009:452). While federal law reforming immigration has stalled, states have taken law making into their own hands. State laws range from making it a felony for an undocumented immigrant to have a job to making it a felony for anyone to house an undocumented immigrant (de Genova 2009:456). Additionally, de Genova (2013) adds that the “durable hegemony of the body of immigration law” is a constant force which decides who is legal and who is illegal (1182). The strength of immigration law makes it essentially “inaccessible” and “impervious” for migrants to challenge it (de

Genova 2013:1182). Importantly, de Genova (2013:1191) makes the distinction that the politics of citizenship is about a politics of difference which is institutionalized through law setting up immigrant illegality. While immigration policy of the United States has continued to define legal versus illegal status of immigrants, it largely ignores the fact that laws which are supposed to promote economic growth can cause spikes in migration. Gilberto Rosas (2007) explains how the spike in immigration from Mexico was intensified in 1994, the same year the NAFTA went into effect. Rosas describes that Mexico suffered from its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression which caused Mexicans to migrate to find new opportunities (2007:87). While Mexicans and other immigrants from Latin America are seeking new opportunities in the United States, state and federal immigration policies have been successful in relegating these immigrants to a low position in society.

Particularly for undocumented youth who are stymied by illegality and are unable to improve their lives through education, many of whom have excelled in school and were offered scholarships, face an uncertain future in the United States. Their scholarships, sometimes large enough to cover the full cost of tuition, now only pay a small portion when their undocumented status becomes known. In Indiana, undocumented youth are forced to pay international tuition rates to attend college. State government in Indiana has cracked down on undocumented youth with the passage of HB1402. This bill signed into law on May 1, 2011 prevents undocumented youth from receiving in-state tuition. The bill prompted a protest by several Latino college students, five of six of whom were undocumented. In an attempt to meet then Governor Mitch Daniels, the six Latino youth were arrested before being released (RTV6 2011). The

students were also protesting a copycat version of Arizona's nationally debated SB590, Indiana's being SB1070, which had already gone through changes such as removing the provision that would have allowed police officers to have asked for proof of citizenship and in place would have installed fines to businesses that knowingly hired undocumented immigrants. There was outcry from the Indianapolis Convention and Visitors Association (ICVA) and from clients who were threatening to cease doing business with the Indianapolis Convention Center should the bill pass (Rader 2011). The bill ultimately failed to progress after the Supreme Court of the United States ruled Arizona's SB590 to be unconstitutional. Indiana's version of the bill lost the support of the State Attorney General Greg Zoeller as he admitted that parts of it would be unable to be defended in court as they were deemed unconstitutional (Noorani 2012).

The last major federal immigration policy to pass into law was the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 which ultimately granted citizenship to some three million undocumented immigrants. This citizenship was given after a penalty fine, payment of back taxes, and an admission of guilt was provided by the undocumented immigrant. Among IRCA's most important provisions included making it illegal for businesses to knowingly hire undocumented immigrants and making employers assert the legality of their employees' citizenship. However, IRCA was not without problems. It largely ignored the factors which foment undocumented immigration especially in regards to immigrant employment. While immigration laws attempt to restrict and "illegalize" undocumented immigration, it ignores the large demand for service sector jobs in the United States. Still, many people in the United States want to stick with the provisions set for by the IRCA of 1986. During an IndyCAN meeting with Indiana's

Republican senator Dan Coats, Coats described that many of his constituents want the federal government to make due on the promises in IRCA before passing new immigration legislation. Several other immigration reform bills were attempted to be made into law in the mid-2000s.

Mentioned previously, the Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, also known as the Sensenbrenner Bill, sought to place hard penalties on undocumented workers. The bill would increase fines of undocumented workers, increase spending to “secure” the border, and criminalize aiding “illegal aliens.” Representative Sensenbrenner’s bill sparked fears that mass deportations would occur which prompted the immigration protests that occurred widespread in 2006. While the bill passed in the House of Representatives, it failed to pass in the Senate. Another attempt at wide scale immigration reform was in 2006 with the introduction of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act (CIRA). The bill was similar to the 2005 bill but provided a way to citizenship, an increased limit of the number of guest workers, and more stringent border security. Again this reform passed in the Senate yet failed in the House of Representatives. The 2000s closed with several failed efforts at immigration reform. While politicians could not come to a consensus on immigration reform, the population of undocumented immigrants continued to grow leading to renewed debate in beginning early in the next decade.

The most recent effort at sweeping immigration reform has been the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013, also known as Senate Bill 744 or S. 744, which was introduced by Democratic senator Chuck Schumer of New York. Most salient of its provisions includes an earned pathway to

citizenship which would allow for undocumented immigrants to apply for citizenship under several circumstances. Applicants would need to pay a fine, pay all back taxes, pass a background check, not have a felony or three or more misdemeanors, and go through a thirteen year waiting period. During this waiting period, undocumented immigrants would be able to receive legal status while waiting for their citizenship to be processed. The pathway to citizenship for the immigrant is also based on increased border security. The bill passed in the on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013 with a vote of 68-32. Importantly, S.744 would allow for the undocumented children who were brought into the United States to apply for a provisional legal status and then gain permanent legal residency after a five year waiting period.

There is criticism within the undocumented immigration community about S. 744. Their concern is due to the fact that structural vulnerability is still present within the bill. First, the cost of the fees and fines to get a legal status are expected to be very expensive and on a per person basis. Families of undocumented immigrants would essentially have to pick and choose which family members would receive the temporary legal status known as “registered provisional immigrant” (RPI). Immigrants would still have to live in fear of deportation as they are forced to remain with an illegal status as they may be unable to pay the high price for the RPI status. Another criticism that some immigrants have of the bill concerns the employment period requirement. S.744 requires that undocumented immigrants must have maintained steady employment and must not have unemployment gaps spanning sixty days or more. Employment for undocumented immigrants can be vagary and may lead to disqualification in applying for the RPI status. If S.744 were to be signed into law with this provision, many of the immigrants that the

bill is seeking to give a legal status to would not qualify and thus not resolving the issue as a large undocumented population would likely remain a part of the United States population. While the proposed immigration reform would grant a means to citizenship for many immigrants, many others would have to wait longer or remain undocumented due to specific costs and provisions in the bill.

### *Conclusion*

The racialization of citizenship is a major issue in the debates about immigration reform. For the people involved in nativist groups, the racialization of undocumented Latino immigrants attempts to set up a barrier to citizenship. The perceived race of undocumented Latino immigrants is an apparent concern regardless if these anti-immigrant groups claim that “it’s not about race.” Data and information provided by these anti-immigration groups are usually filled with racially charged names such as “illegal aliens” and stating immigrants to be drug dealers and criminals.

Despite facing racism, discrimination, and structural vulnerability many Latino immigrants find themselves completely motivated by the opportunity that can be found in the United States. Immigrants such as Javier Torres and Hector Pérez demonstrate that it is possible to move up in a society which labels them as “illegal.” In many ways, the Latino immigrants I interviewed demonstrate that being an American does not entail being European descent and of Protestant faith, as anti-immigration groups would make it seem, but how each person conceptualizes their own identity. Other research has shown that Latino immigrants, undocumented or not, feel as though they are part of American society (Chavez 1998:185). Perceptions of race are deeply embedded in issues of citizenship despite the belief that the United States now exists in a post-racial age.

Although particular conservative groups argue that undocumented Latino immigrants are not Americans, many undocumented Latino immigrants have made a successful life for themselves in the United States. Just as Chavez (1998) argues, the wider American public must make Latino immigrants, undocumented or not, feel a part of this society. This concept is perhaps most poignantly addressed in the words of a pastor who spoke at a Campaign for Citizenship prayer vigil. He stated that passing immigration reform is “not just a Latino issue, but an *American* issue.”

### **Chapter 3**

## **The Foundation of a Social Movement: Bringing Together Faith and Political Engagement**

In early June 2013, several of Indiana's largest businesses and prominent religious leaders came together to pledge their support for the immigration reform bill that was being debated in the Senate. Together, these business and religious leaders gathered at Eli Lilly headquarters in Indianapolis with supporters of the IndyCAN and, specifically, the Campaign for Citizenship. I arrived at Eli Lilly at approximately 4:40 p.m. I checked in at the front desk and was given a plastic name badge stamped with my name and the word "visitor." I understood then why I had to give my name in advance to Pablo Navaja, a Campaign for Citizenship organizer, in order to attend the event. I joined with several other volunteers in the lobby and waited to be escorted in groups to the meeting room. I joked with my friend Claudio Alvarez that we had to wait since the groups were escorted up to the room by importance. Not long afterwards we were taken to the top floor of Eli Lilly and were brought to a large meeting room with sixty seats. The front of the room was occupied by two tables facing the seats with three name placards on each of the tables. The tables were separated by a podium and two large screens were behind the tables. The table on the left consisted of the business leaders. The represented businesses were Eli Lilly, Farm Bureau, and the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. The table on the right consisted of religious leaders from multiple denominations. The religious representatives included the archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis, a Lutheran minister who was originally from India, and an African American Baptist minister.



The room was packed and hot by the time the meeting began. All of the chairs were full and even the standing room became crowded with over seventy people occupying the room. The local Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) and a reporter from the Indianapolis Star newspaper came to cover the event. Two translators worked outside the meeting room with headsets to translate for the large monolingual Spanish speaking audience listening to the meeting, who were equipped with the receiver headsets. Religious leaders shared biblical parables alluding to businesses cooperating with religion for the good of the common person. Young IndyCAN leaders gave testimonials about the struggles of undocumented immigrant life, many of which were rife with fears of having their families torn apart by deportation or sacrificing collegiate opportunities. Business leaders emphasized how immigrants historically built this nation while the Eli Lilly representative reiterated the importance of their “international” employees. The Lutheran minister explained how problematic terms such as “alien” are when referring to immigrants. He explained that when employers would ask him if he whether he was a “legal or illegal alien” he laughingly exclaimed he was not sure how to respond since he thought aliens were from Mars. Archbishop Joseph Tobin from the Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis explained the trouble he experienced just trying to get an Indiana driver’s license after recently accepting his position as archbishop. He tied this to the problems undocumented immigrants face trying to obtain a legal status in the United States. Importantly, the archbishop explained that the Catholic Church views immigration reform as an important issue and that he was telling his priests to inform the voters in their congregations of this pro-immigration reform stance.

The business and religious leaders gathered at Eli Lilly to publicly pledge their support for the immigration reform bill. This public, which joined together religion with a political cause, revealed that the line separating church and state is an elusive one. The meeting closed with a Latino youth leader imploring the business representatives to meet with their political representatives to vote in support of the immigration reform bill. A final call was placed by another Latino youth leader who asked that the staffers who were present on behalf of Senator Joe Donnelly and Congresswoman Susan Brooks let their representatives know that both the religious and business leaders of Indianapolis support immigration reform.

This event at Eli Lilly illustrates how the church and the state interact with one another. Religion and religious institutions often fostered the development of social justice organizations created by immigrants (Wood 2005, Jeung 2007, Palacios 2007, Mooney 2007, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008). It is exactly at this point where the line between church and state is blurred as religious political activists attempt to sway the vote of their politicians. Religion provides the stage through which communities can organize through the commonality of faith. IndyCAN is draws new members to its organization based on common political goals and a shared religious faith. However, IndyCAN does not proselytize any religious faith but rather focuses solely on social justice issues. It is through religious faith that IndyCAN frames and contextualizes the social justice concerns of its members. In this chapter, I show how IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship employ religion as a means to organize and mobilize the community to pursue progressive policy change.

### *The Indianapolis Congregation Action Network*

When the IndyCAN was founded in early 2011, the organization backed its ideals on religious faith as a means to justify the social justice needs of its members. IndyCAN has three main branches: Safe Communities, which is attempting to implement policies which reduce violence; Mass Transit, which seeks to influence legislation to allow for improvements to Indianapolis' mass transit system; and the Campaign for Citizenship, which is aimed at bringing together the community of Indianapolis to lobby for immigration reform. Upon its conception, volunteers from IndyCAN went into the community to speak with the residents of Indianapolis. The goal was to come to a consensus of the most pertinent issues facing Indianapolis' residents. After taking extensive surveys of Indianapolis and speaking with many residents of Indianapolis, IndyCAN identified four main areas to focus on through their grassroots organizing. These areas are being addressed through the work of each of its three branches and consist of: "Pathways to Opportunities," "Public Safety and Criminal Justice," housing, and health. Pathways to Opportunities is a set of goals in itself which includes improving accessibility to jobs and education as well as passing legislation to augment the mass transit system. Public Safety and Criminal Justice also consists of a set of goals which seeks to offer alternatives to street life, healing the relationship between police and "communities of color" as well as incorporating immigrants and previously incarcerated individuals into the community. IndyCAN members are also attempting to improve housing in Indianapolis by removing decrepit and abandoned houses and buildings. Health is a final issue and the members are working towards improved accessibility to healthcare for everyone. As a result of their organizing IndyCAN met with public

officials, state and federal representatives, and business leaders in order to explore ways in which to improve these areas through the passage of new legislation.

Volunteers in the Campaign for Citizenship voiced to me that religion has the ability to bring together the communities. Religion provides a common ground that can undercut racial and class divisions. Eduardo Quesada, a young Campaign for Citizenship leader, explained to me that religion can bring communities together in a society that seems so disconnected. Quesada explained to me that he feels as though communities are becoming more and more individualized and losing a sense of cohesion, religion can remedy this situation:

I believe, like I told you, we've lost that community aspect. What's so cool and so amazing about religion, it doesn't matter what kind of religion, and we become a community [through religion]. Especially in the Christian church, we're a community, we work together. In a sense, the thing I told you that we've lost communities, churches have the tendency to put communities together because we all share the same thing.

To Quesada, religion provides a framework that unites communities and allows them to have a basis through which they can work together for political change.

Training provided by grassroots organizations is an important means to effectively engage their members in politics. PICO's training sessions emphasize cultural, political, religious, and ideological differences of the volunteers and yet it also focuses on the similarities as well as building solidarity between the members (Palacios 2007).

While members involved in a grassroots organizations like PICO or IndyCAN may come from very different backgrounds and socioeconomic classes, religion is emphasized as a unifier and a base from which social justice organization can occur. IndyCAN emulates PICO training sessions which it provided at different events throughout the year.

Research has shown that some Mexican immigrants seek to improve their rights

through organizations devoted to the Virgin of Guadalupe. Anthropologist, Alyshia Gálvez documents how immigrants working through *comités guadalupanos* [Guadalupan committees] “supersede” politics by declaring that everyone is equal to the “Mother of God” (2010:183). In this way, immigrant rights advocates declare that their demands of citizenship are beyond the reach of the state (Gálvez 2010). Gálvez elaborates that their demands are based on an idea of “universal humanism.” Universal humanism fosters the ideas that everyone is equal, human life is above material possessions, and the creation of alternative economic models. This idea is found within the Campaign for Citizenship branch of IndyCAN which its members believe that advocating for a pathway to citizenship supersedes the economic and political standpoints against the reform.

The collaboration and relationship building between the white, Latino, and African American communities have been important facets in the work completed by IndyCAN. The relationship building between the communities, and specifically between immigrant and non-immigrant communities, has been critical to the successes of the Campaign for Citizenship events. The communities members engaged in IndyCAN are working towards a common goal of improving their situation. This concept especially encapsulates the Campaign for Citizenship branch as undocumented Latino immigrants can feel connected through their migration experience and work toward a political goal, in this case, for immigration reform legislation. Their participation is captured in the notion of cultural citizenship (Ong 1996) as undocumented Latino immigrants are creating a space of belonging within the Campaign for Citizenship. Furthermore, religious faith transcends racial, political, and class inequalities among the members of IndyCAN. For the majority of volunteers in the Campaign for Citizenship, Catholicism

provides a common ground which the community members can join in solidarity. This collaboration between the various communities in Indianapolis is the key to future political successes according to Shoshanna Spector, executive director of IndyCAN.

Spector stated:

Latinos in Indiana are 2% of the population and 10% in Marion County but really, as you know in the Campaign for Citizenship, that their theory is that they're not going to be able to move [Senator] Joe Donnelly to win this pathway [to citizenship] without the support of non-immigrants and that in order to be able to move the fabric of Indiana they believe they need to build relationships with non-immigrants who understand that our faiths are intertwined; that if we're going to create a region of opportunity that means we have to really build relationships across race, class, denomination, religious affiliation, political affiliation, and really build significant power. Latinos are very clear that in order to win the kind of systemic change that they want to see they have to happen in collaboration with others.

The Campaign for Citizenship is responding to oppressive anti-immigrant policies and structures which create structural vulnerability in the undocumented immigrant population. The movement creates a space where undocumented immigrants can gather safely to discuss their situation and plan events to effect policy change. While the makeup of the Campaign for Citizenship branch is overwhelmingly Latino, there is still a presence of African American and white community members. The branch has been able to grow steadily in the short amount of time it has existed. While there is usually only a core of about fifteen to twenty leaders who attend the planning meetings, they have been able to mobilize as many as eight hundred people of all communities to attend events. In order to address issues of political issues facing the residents of Indianapolis, the Campaign for Citizenship fosters unity and participation through religion. While Latinos are the overwhelming majority in the Campaign for Citizenship, collaboration with African American and white communities is important for IndyCAN in achieving

success. This collaboration of communities and participation in the events is based on a platform of “Opportunity for All” which encompasses the goals of IndyCAN. The Opportunity for All platforms captures the essence of IndyCAN as it emphasizes the importance of equality and unity. The unity of IndyCAN members was apparent at a large prayer vigil organized to gain the support of Indiana’s politicians.

In April 2013, Latinos, African Americans, and white IndyCAN supporters joined together at St. Helena’s Catholic Church in effort to sway an attending Congressman and other political representatives to vote in favor of the new immigration reform bill. I arrived to St. Helena’s Catholic Church on a warm Saturday around 10 a.m. School buses arrived which were full of IndyCAN supporters from multiple churches began dropping off Latinos, African Americans, and whites. I found myself helping to collect the attendees’ information for coming to this event. By the time I had finished signing people in and moved inside the church, it had almost completely filled to standing room. I learned later that over eight hundred people were in attendance.

Among the prominent people in the audience were Congressman André Carson, the archbishop of the Indianapolis Catholic Archdiocese and the bishop of the Kentucky-Indiana Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. The speakers included undocumented Latino youth and undocumented immigrants who described their situations of distress due to their current immigration policies and explained why there is an implicit need for immigration reform. Other speakers included a white woman who described how her undocumented immigrant husband and father of her young daughter had been arrested in the night at their home and had since been deported back to Mexico. Another testimony was given by two young Latino immigrants described losing parents to deportation

roused a standing ovation from the crowd. All of the speakers noted that politicians need to make a concerted effort to address immigration reform from a religious and humanitarian perspective and not from a political mindset. The event ended with Congressman André Carson addressing the crowd and publicly pledging his support for the immigration reform bill.



Prayer Vigil at St. Helena's Catholic Church. Photo by Ryan I. Logan.

An overwhelming message at the prayer vigil included an emphasis on unity among all of the residents of Indianapolis. Phrases such as “together we are stronger” and topics relating to “Hoosier families” were important messages read at events and in speeches. IndyCAN and its branches emphasize that the way to create their desired systemic change is through solidarity and having multiple forces moving politicians and community leaders on issues. Shoshanna Spector also commented on this by stating that “I think they (the Campaign for Citizenship) have a vision of real systemic change that



you have to be able to move multiple pieces at the same time in order for it to add up to a significant shift in the power structure.”

This prayer vigil at St. Helena’s Catholic Church demonstrates how the Campaign for Citizenship is trying to create systemic change through organizing Indianapolis’ communities through a shared religious faith. The religious setting of the church, the presence of Protestant and Catholic clergy, and the appeals of participants for politicians to act on their “faith values” encapsulates how the Campaign for Citizenship is working to cause political change. While the event was essentially a political rally with protest signs, political messages, and statistics, the Campaign for Citizenship demonstrated that it had the support of religious groups. This religious support essentially forces politicians to at least consider the Campaign’s political issue whether or not it was in accordance with their own political positions.

However, religion cannot always guarantee the participation of undocumented Latino immigrants in political activism. Arturo Hernández voiced to me there a few reasons why some Latino immigrants do not participate in the movement. He stated:

*Hay mucha gente que, desafortunadamente...* There are a lot of people that, unfortunately, because of fear, ignorance, or simply apathy are not involved. That’s why when they (the Campaign for Citizenship) organized us, everyone says (that they want to be involved) and does but not in reality. When I participate in these activities and these organizations, I feel frustrated that my community is not here one hundred percent.

Despite his feelings of frustration, Hernández admits that everyone is looking for something different within these kinds of organizations. Hernández understands that everyone participates in IndyCAN for different reasons. He stated that some are looking for legal documentation while others just want to be treated equitably. Hernández also describes how structural forces such as a fear of police, deportation, or losing

employment keep many undocumented immigrants in a vulnerable position and unwilling to participate in Campaign for Citizenship events. These forces along with repressive immigration policies create a situation of structural violence which forces many undocumented immigrants to remain in the shadows. Still, there was consensus with many of my interviewees that the foundation of religion was a primary motivator in their participation. Religion, and Catholicism in particular, help form a space of belonging for undocumented Latino immigrants (Gálvez 2010:38). Despite fears of the police, deportation, and unemployment religion provides a part of the identity for many Campaign for Citizenship volunteers and the wider IndyCAN community.

#### *The Role of Clergy in the Immigrant Reform Movement*

Throughout the branches of IndyCAN, Catholic and Protestant denominations are active in supporting these events. Protestant denominations are active in the Campaign for Citizenship although Catholicism is particularly strong in this branch of IndyCAN. The Catholic churches of Indianapolis play an important role for Latino immigrants in Indianapolis as many profess the Catholic faith. While religious clergy of Catholic and Protestant denominations are often present at many IndyCAN events, they have taken more of a supportive role rather than a leading role. In interviews, Catholic clergy often told me that change needed to occur from within the community of Indianapolis and not due to the clergy advocating for change. Archbishop Joseph Tobin of the Indianapolis Archdiocese has been involved in social justice issues for decades. During the 1980s, Archbishop Tobin worked with attorneys in the United States and Canada in order to aid immigrants from Central America in finding refuge in Canada.

Archbishop Tobin has been a leading voice in the immigration reform movement. Archbishops Tobin summed up the way in which he views religion should interact with the government by through a biblical parable:

The Good Samaritan knew that he couldn't do, even though he kind of rescued this guy, that he couldn't provide everything the guy needed because he had to go someplace else; so he brought him to an innkeeper. He gave him some money and he said "I'm going to come back [and check on you]." Well, I think the Church, in approaching some of the other society-wide institutions, like the government, realizes it can't do everything the government should do but what it can do is support the government but hold it accountable like the Samaritan did [to the innkeeper]. I think that what we try to do is help the government be accountable to the highest values of our society.

Archbishop Tobin added that to him "social justice is a constituent element of the gospel." Tobin also reiterated that his involvement was important in the Campaign for Citizenship and that "I think it's the right thing [supporting immigration reform] and I think it's because I believe my role as pastor of the archdiocese is to be part of not only the joys but the struggles of the people. That's why I'm there." His view reveals the important support which the Catholic Church hierarchy is giving to immigrants and Indianapolis. Support for immigrants is found nationally in the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) which I discuss in chapter 5. Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, Archbishop Tobin displays the biblical reasons for the inclusion of religion within the government. IndyCAN is also including this as a strategy to appeal to the religious side of politicians.

Additionally, many Latino immigrants in Indianapolis feel as though the immigration reform movement has legitimacy due to the backing of priests and prelates as they work toward achieving a pathway to citizenship. Many Catholic priests in Indianapolis are ardent supporters of social justice issues and I often encountered priests

at the prayer vigils and other events put on by the Campaign for Citizenship. These priests also were a major factor in representing their Latino congregants by attending the meetings with Senators Dan Coats and Joe Donnelly and with Representative Susan Brooks. This vocal and visible support of the Catholic Church has been invaluable in offering legitimacy to the social justice work of the Latino community in Indianapolis. IndyCAN support and local priest, Father Tom Walker, describes the importance of the participation of priests:

When the Church wasn't saying anything there was kind of a dichotomy there, they [the Latino community] didn't feel the real support of the Church but I think now that the archbishop and lots of priests have become more vocal about it I think they feel better about doing it.

The official stance of the Catholic Church has come full circle in not only supporting the ethno-religiosity of Latino immigrants but their social justice needs as well. While I did not specifically address why the clergy do not take more of a leadership role, I gathered that they do not want to appropriate the movement. In taking a supportive role, the clergy allow the Latino community to exercise their own agency and make decisions about what they feel is most pertinent to the movement. The United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has been an ardent supporter of immigrants and has issued statements which support a pro-reform stance on immigration. Archbishop Tobin has echoed this stance since taking his position. The sway of the archbishop has influenced the priests whose churches have large populations of Latinos and Latino immigrants.

Faith-based activism seeks to address the “morality” of legislation like immigration reform. Addressing the morality of legislation was an important focus at IndyCAN events. Particularly at the IndyCAN event at Eli Lilly’s headquarters mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Archbishop Tobin reiterated that such a

reform is a moral and not simply a political issue. In his speech, he did not advocate breaking laws but rather that the current laws should “make sense.” Furthermore, he added that much of the undocumented immigration is due to current trade treaties such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which have caused economic disparities thus sparking immigration from Latin America (Gálvez 2010:12). Archbishop Tobin recognizes the structural violence that was created and continues to exist with the implementation of such trade agreements (Gálvez 2010, Holmes 2013). Religious leaders from Protestant denominations also suggested that a level of morality exists in such legislation. In this way, religion offers a moral foundation for people to advocate for political change thus bridging together community organizing with religion.

Despite a separation of church and state, there is still a considerable interaction that occurs between politics and religion. IndyCAN and PICO both feel as though they can effect political change through appealing to the faith of politicians. In this sense, religion serves to unite politicians with the goals the members of these grassroots organizations. These organizations are able to employ religious faith as a strategy to effect political change. Prelates and clergy of the Catholic Church in Indianapolis explained to me that there is an implicit social justice aspect to the gospel teachings. Father Tom Walker of St. Daniel’s Catholic Church expressed his view on the clergy’s participation in IndyCAN events by stating “I think it should be more of a leader driven movement rather than a clerical driven movement. That’s not saying we shouldn’t be involved, I think we should as we can at least be visible.” Father Walker stressed that change needs to happen from within leaders of the community. Similarly, Father John Harris of St. George’s Catholic Church explained that “It’s [IndyCAN] kind of a

grassroots organization. The church did not go out, I mean I didn't go out and say 'hey we've got to start supporting this,' they [the Latino community] came to us and said 'we want your support.'" The Church's support in the social justice events organized by IndyCAN and especially the Campaign for Citizenship has been important to many of the volunteers.

Clergy voiced their opinions that their support is critical in this newest push for immigration reform. There were significant rallies and demonstrations nationwide during the push for immigration reform in the mid-2000s and some immigrants may felt apathetic the movement once the legislation failed to come to fruition. However, Father Walker believes that the vocal and visible support of the Catholic Church during this new push for reform has been critical:

I think it's [the immigration reform movement] stronger in terms of at least now it has archdiocesan support, very verbal and very visible archdiocesan support, be it the support of the archbishop and he's been very vocal about that and I think that helps and I think that has caused a lot of people to rally around it.

The fact that the Catholic Church has been a vocal and visible supporter of immigrant rights was emphasized repeatedly during the interview. Father Walker further explained that when the Catholic Church was not vocalizing its support for the movement that a contradiction was created between the Church's support and immigrants' rights. He elaborated that the immigrants feel better knowing that the church is supporting them vocally and that the priests are taking an active role in the immigration reform movement. Still, Father Walker confirmed his belief that this movement should be driven from the community and not from the clergy. In addition to the support of the priests and archbishop, there has been support on the national level from the United States Council

of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The USCCB penned a letter on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 that voiced the support for immigrants and immigration reform. Importantly, the letter makes the claim that Jesus Christ was an immigrant himself. The bishops make the claim that Jesus “emigrated” to Egypt as a refugee, then “migrating” from Jerusalem to Galilee, and finally “emigrating” from death to life through the resurrection. The vocal and visible support of the Catholic Church, especially from the highest levels of authority, grants the immigration reform movement legitimacy.

The support of the religious clergy is important for IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship in their attempts to foment political change through organizing around shared religious faith. Archbishop Tobin stated that he personally met with Senator Joe Donnelly and Congresswoman Susan Brooks, both Catholics, to discuss the issue of immigration reform. Furthermore, the political involvement of the clergy sends a message to the parishioners of their churches. Clergy are informing their voters of political issues brought to light through IndyCAN. With the support of the clergy, IndyCAN is combining religion with politics in an attempt to create progressive policy change.

#### *Inclusion and the White Community*

Not everyone participating in the Campaign for Citizenship is from the Latino community or has Latin American heritage. There are ardent supports from the African American and white communities who are taking an active role in the immigrant rights movement. While these two communities are still the minority at the various Campaign for Citizenship events, their support is a compelling and valued component. The campaign emphasizes the idea that “through diversity there is solidarity” and while there

has been support at times from the white community, it is often deficient. Religion is the force which is attempting to transcend race and class barriers and acting to unite the various communities involved in IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship.

Anthropologist Leo Chavez writes that “until the larger [American] society imagines undocumented immigrants as part of the community, they will continue to live as ‘outsiders’ inside American society” (1998:188). Gaining a wider acceptance of undocumented immigrants is an important facet of IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship. IndyCAN is trying to bring together the white, African American, and Latino communities based on similarities rather than perceived differences. Religion is the acting force which levels the invisible barriers of class, race, and citizenship. Still, white and African American support in the Campaign for Citizenship was at times rather modest compared to their presence in other branches of IndyCAN.

I experienced this myself while participating in calling phone banks to help inform a group of white supporters who had previously been at Campaign for Citizenship events. As I called my way through the list of about thirty people that IndyCAN provided me with, I was rebuffed again and again about coming to the event which was a training session in preparation of meeting with House Representative Susan Brooks. I got through to about half of the people on the list and was turned down by everyone from the white community. One month prior, I had undertaken the duty of calling the Latino members of a particular parish and had much easier time garnering support. While these results are unsurprising, they still compel a deeper analysis of the whole situation. Why are white community members not more of a presence at events? The white community is more present in other branches of IndyCAN such as Mass Transit. Their support emphasizes a



focus on issues that they feel will have a more direct impact on them and this might explain the reason for their lacking presence. However, there are some dedicated members from the white community aiding the Campaign for Citizenship. Efforts are being made at Catholic parishes to try and unite white and Latino communities together and garner more, diverse support for the Campaign for Citizenship.

*Bringing Communities Together through the Bonds of Catholicism*

While the support of the white community has been lackluster at times in the Campaign for Citizenship, at parishes with a significant population of both white and Latino members there have been attempts to bridge the gaps between the two communities. The lack of support from the white community illustrates that there seems to be a lack of connection with the Latino community. This notion was reiterated by John Harris, the priest of St. George's Catholic Church and supporter of IndyCAN. Father Harris explained that there seems to be "link" missing to the white community to connect it with the issues facing the Latino community. In order to bring the white and Latino communities together, Father Harris and his church developed a bilingual Mass called the "Unity Mass." Father Harris explained that:

The [Unity] Mass is celebrated in both languages so we don't repeat but some parts are done in English and we just go back and forth. The opening prayer we'll do it in English, the first reading we'll do Spanish, the second reading will be English, the gospel will be Spanish, and so we go back and forth. We try and get a mix of servers, lectors, and Eucharistic ministers from both communities so everybody is together.

The reaction has been positive over the past year and half that the Unity Mass has been occurring. The numbers of parishioners attending this Mass has steadily risen and has shown greater cohesiveness between the white and Latino community of St. George's Catholic Church. Father Harris also stated that "I'm really proud of the parish and how

they're embracing the Hispanics and also the Hispanics embracing the English because there is resistance on both sides of that. Both communities are allowing themselves to be stretched a little bit." This stretching is a promising improvement especially since Father Harris is seeing the number of Latinos attending his church continuing to grow. This increased participation has also been important in getting the white community to participate in the Campaign for Citizenship events. Father Harris stated that many of his parishioners attended some of the biggest events for the campaign.

Other Catholic parishes have also made changes to bring the Latino and white communities together. St. Daniel's Catholic Church has made significant changes to services and church councils as they initiate their "one church, one body" plan. Sister Elizabeth Campbell, head of the Hispanic Ministry at St. Daniel's, explained how the parish adapted to the growth of its Latino population by continually bringing the two communities together:

You know it had to go through stages to grow but now "one body, one church," that we'd all say "I'm for the Hispanics" and "he's the pastor associated for the English, she's for the English" but now it's we're all working together and as much as we can, whatever we do for the English speaking we do for the Spanish speaking. So the emphasis has really been put on that so that it's not a distinction.

St. Daniel's and St. George's Catholic Churches have made continual strides attempting to join the Latino and white communities. This has helped mobilize the support of some members of the white community as Father Harris reiterated that many members of the white community have come to events in support of the Campaign for Citizenship. Still, some members of the white community have been critical of their fellow members.

There has also been criticism of white community members from the white participating in the Campaign for Citizenship events. George Schultz, a Lutheran pastor,

explained his frustration with the lack of participation from the white community. While there has been a large participation of the white community in the other branches of IndyCAN, there is little help in the Campaign for Citizenship branch. Schultz explained that “it’s lacking [in participation from the white community] in that because as I shared with you, either in this question or another question, I’ve been a minority, and no I didn’t need to be a majority, but there could have been a few more of us.” He further explained that being a minority at the Campaign for Citizenship has been a humbling and revealing experience. Schultz now finds himself in a position where he does not know the language and has to have someone translate for him thereby placing him a reverse situation in which immigrants find themselves in when faced with English-only discrimination (Pac 2012, Beard 2013). His experiences participating in the Campaign for Citizenship give him a better understanding of the situation of undocumented Latino immigrants in the United States. Ultimately, Schultz is hoping to find ways to bring together the white and Latino communities.

While gaining the support of the white community has, at times, been difficult for the Campaign for Citizenship, interpreting the lack of participation is more difficult to ascertain. Apathy and opposition to immigration reform seem to be the two main causes of the disconnection between the white and Latino communities. George Schultz was also candid that he had passed on information about the Campaign for Citizenship to several other pastors. He expressed that some pastors seem to have no interest in participating in the various events. An additional point to consider is the lack of desire for a person to become involved with a cause that will not seem to benefit them at all. Despite this, Schultz expressed how his story was an important part of the prayer vigils as well. By

emphasizing the story of not just Latinos but including the stories of all participants, the campaign is fostering an inclusiveness of all its members. In this way, religion alone is not enough to garner more involvement from the white community. While some may not believe that the fight for immigration reform is their fight, IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship is seeking to gain their support which will undoubtedly affect the whole community.

### *Conclusion*

Overall, religion functions as the foundation through which IndyCAN bases its message of social justice. IndyCAN is organizing the communities of Indianapolis through shared religious faith. Through this basis in religion and with the support of the clergy, IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship are working to create progressive policy change. IndyCAN has grown significantly in the short few years that it has existed. Working off of a platform of “Opportunity for All” and rallying around mass transit, better jobs, citizenship, and justice, IndyCAN has built a substantial base from which it continues to grow. The focus on collaboration between the communities brings together all members and branches of IndyCAN. Religion has been particularly important as IndyCAN uses it to transcend race, class, and citizenship barriers between the different communities. While religious faith acts as a unifying force among the members of IndyCAN, it does not always bring involvement in the Campaign for Citizenship from the white and African American communities.

This organization has met with many local and national politicians in addition to important Indiana- and Indianapolis-based businesses such as Eli Lilly and Company. In this way, businesses, IndyCAN, politicians, and community members are engaging

around the topic of immigration. Combining religion with social activism is a model IndyCAN has adopted from its affiliated national branch, PICO. Thus, religion also adds another dimension in which politicians are asked to look at legislation through a religious and not just partisan view. Furthermore, IndyCAN consistently emphasizes unity between its members as well as the residents of Indianapolis. Through campaign slogans such as “together we are stronger” and “*cuando actuamos, actuamos juntos*” [when we act, we act together] combined with the emphasis that all Indianapolis’ residents are “Hoosier families,” IndyCAN is attempting to foster a group identity and stronger solidarity between the various communities.

Religion has provided a strong base for grassroots organizations such as IndyCAN. Clergy from Catholic and Protestant denominations are voicing their support in all of the branches of IndyCAN. Specifically in the Campaign for Citizenship, Catholic clergy going up to the archdiocese are offering their vocal and visible support. While clergy are often present at IndyCAN meetings and events, they have taken a purely supportive role in the movement and are not leading the charge. All of the clergy I interviewed believed that these changes need to come from the people and not from themselves. Their support sends a message to politicians as they can sway their parishioners to social justice causes and issues. IndyCAN provides itself as the vehicle through which political change can occur and is the primary mover of political engagement with the communities in Indianapolis. IndyCAN fosters political change by bridging politics with religion.

## Chapter 4

### *Testimonios: Politicizing Pain or Sharing Stories?*

*Yo soy de Colombia...* I'm from Colombia and I was in a situation that was dangerous because of the violence. In the city, it's a little different. It's not the same as the rural areas because there was the war. The people in the city were affected by crime, unemployment, and insecurity. The story that I always tell is that when I was twelve years old, I heard a very large explosion and the apartment building shook like this [moves hands back and forth]. I thought an earthquake had happened but a car bomb had gone off close by.

- Pablo Navaja, on his experiences growing up in a city in Colombia

I was actually born here [in the United States] but my parents are from Mexico and they actually, well, my dad actually came here when he was sixteen and he came for any other reason why people come here; for work. He came here for work, my mom, she didn't come until she met my dad. When my dad got his residency, she applied as well so they were both here legally. We first lived with my aunt and we lived with her for about four years in Los Angeles. After that, it's usually the industrial jobs that have really affected my family because my dad has almost always worked in some kind of factory or anything based on a factory field. His first job, I remember, he told me he worked for twenty years then he lost his job and that's when we moved. I feel like every time we move it's because of some kind of business going somewhere else or something of that nature and that's why I have a sense of why things happen why we move. It's because of employment.

- Eduardo Quesada

*"Si te preguntan, si mi preguntan...* If they ask you, if they ask me if *testimonios* are important, yes; very, very important. They change people's minds.

- Hector Pérez

#### *Introduction*

*Testimonios*, or personal witness, is an experience shared by individuals that reveals a portion of their life or a reason to address problems in society. While *testimonios* are most often delivered by word of mouth, they are also written in the form of song, poetry, memoir, and history (Gonzalez *et al.* 2003; Guerra 2008; Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodriguez 2012). These stories are used as a means to foster solidarity

within a group. Family, friends, and strangers are unified through an individual's narrative which often presents common or shared experiences. In some cases, *testimonios* are being used as a means to educate and effect change in various parts of society (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008, Gonzalez *et al.* 2003, Saavedra and Salazar Pérez 2013) while other research has shown *testimonios* to be able to capture a sense of collectiveness between people (Saavedra and Salazar Pérez 2013). *Testimonios* can be of central importance in church services (Sharp 2004, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008) and political engagements. Specifically, *testimonios* are important because they convey a private story as a means to address problems in society (Guerra 2008, Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodriguez 2012). Despite their intimate nature, *testimonios* are meant to be disseminated and illuminate social ills. Sociologists, Karen Blackmer Reyes and Julia Curry Rodriguez, explain the purpose of sharing *testimonios*:

What is certain is that *testimonio* is not meant to be hidden, made intimate, nor kept secret. The objective of the *testimonio* is to bring to light a wrong, a point of view, or an urgent call for action. Thus, in this manner, the *testimonio* is different from the qualitative method of in-depth interviewing, oral history narration, prose, or spoken word. The *testimonio* is intentional and political (2012:525).

To Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodriguez, the *testimonio* is inherently political and seeks to highlight injustice in society. Additionally, Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodriguez (2012) explain that *testimonios* are used to work toward a collective goal and serve as a means of empowerment for Latino communities. They further define *testimonio* as “evolving from events experienced by a narrator who seeks empowerment through voicing her or his experiences” (Blackmer Reyes, Curry Rodriguez 2012:527). The collectiveness of the *testimonio* is encapsulated in their understanding that although the story is given from one person, “it represents the voice of many whose lives have been

affected by particular social events, such as totalitarian governments, war violence, displacement, or other types of broad social affronts on humanity” (Blackmer Reyes, Curry Rodriguez 2012:528). *Testimonios* are a means through which immigrants are able to collectively share and inspire their community members around each immigrants’ lived experiences. The *testimonios* I heard while conducting ethnographic research revealed many similarities with the aforementioned research.

*Testimonios* are also importantly utilized other than in the sphere of politics. In her assessment of the sanctuary movement of the 1980s, sociologist Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, explains that “testimonials were the sanctuary movement’s key mechanism for recruiting new members” (2008:148). Despite the violence that was recounted in many *testimonios*, they serve as a means to motivate and inspire new members to join the cause. She states “the testimonials help to educate and hook the clergy, and at the same time they deepen the commitment of the workers who narrate their own stories (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008:96). Hondagneu-Sotelo’s (2008) research also reveals the importance of *testimonios* in current social justice activist groups. She highlights that *testimonios* help the clergy in the United States understand the situation of undocumented immigrants and, in doing so, deepens their commitment to social justice issues (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008:95). Her work with the organization, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), documents how immigrants gave *testimonios* to inspire the participation of the clergy in social justice work. Similarly, in his dissertation, Ethan Sharp (2004) reveals how *testimonios* are used to reinforce solidarities between members of churches.



These stories also form an important part of effecting political change and swaying the vote of politicians. My interviewees stressed to me that importance of telling stories which are true and not fictitious in any way. While some interviewees stressed the importance of sharing the *testimonios*, others were more apprehensive about the whether or not the stories were being politicized. In this chapter, I analyze how *testimonios* are a vital component to creating solidarity between the members of IndyCAN and those working specifically in the Campaign for Citizenship. I argue that *testimonios* are an important part of the political engagement for the members of IndyCAN. *Testimonios* are used to create a common ground between people who may have once felt that substantial differences had the potential to divide them.

#### *The Utilization of Testimonios in IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship*

The ubiquity of *testimonios* is a key fixture in all Campaign for Citizenship events. These personal stories and experiences provide a means to humanize immigrants and act as a counterbalance to negative news reports and statistics. In addition, *testimonios* are also used as powerful stories, capable of inspiring fellow community members or changing the minds of politicians. *Testimonios* were shared at the beginning of the smallest IndyCAN meetings to the largest events. They could be as short as an introduction or much longer in the form of a speech. These stories conveyed themes typical to the lives of immigrants, stories of migration, violence, hardship, family, economic opportunity to name a few. IndyCAN also emphasized that everyone has a story to share, not just immigrants. All of the members of IndyCAN, regardless of participation in its specific branches, were encouraged to share experiences from their lives. Noting the importance part of the *testimonio* in all IndyCAN events, I made it an

important topic to discuss during my interviews. Archbishop Tobin told me that he approved of IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship's use of use of *testimonios* and explained that:

I think it's much easier to do terrible things to people if you can dehumanize them. I think what IndyCAN does is very wise when it meets with politicians; it encourages the people who are meeting to tell their stories, to say that this is a face, "I'm not a statistic."

*Testimonios* can serve as a means to humanize undocumented immigrants. Moreover, their stories often highlight their plight which is caused by current immigration policy thus demonstrating the implicit need for progressive immigration reform.

Many of the *testimonios* I heard revolved around such themes as of lack of opportunity or experiencing violence in the home country. Their *testimonios* attest to the reasons why migrating to the United States was vital to the future of the immigrant and their family. During my participation at all Campaign for Citizenship events, *testimonios* were also shared between the members themselves. Other times, *testimonios* are employed in order to elicit the participation of potential new volunteer (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008). Everyone was engaged with one another sharing their stories, often to highlight the similarities between people rather than differences. One Campaign for Citizenship organizer, Pablo Navaja, told me:

[*En IndyCAN*] *Tenemos güeros, morenos y latinos...* [In IndyCAN] We have whites, blacks, and Latinos. When they share these stories, much of the time, many whites don't know what it's like to be undocumented. Or many Latino leaders don't know that sometimes whites are poor or that the blacks are poor as well. I believe it's through these stories that you find solidarity and connection between people.

Navaja also emphasized that when IndyCAN members from different backgrounds share their personal stories together, many times they discover that they share similar Judeo-

Christian beliefs, are committed to family, and earning living. *Testimonios* are essential in creating a common ground and exposing that people share more similarities than differences. IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship importantly emphasize that people other than those coming from Latin America have a story to share. The stories of all of the members of IndyCAN are of equal importance and the sharing of these stories is what creates solidarity through diversity.

*Bringing Together Politicians and Campaign for Citizenship Members*

The Campaign for Citizenship is bringing together politicians, business leaders, religious leaders, and residents of Indianapolis on a regular basis. Like Latino members of CLUE (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008), members of IndyCAN are also attempting to influence the minds of politicians through recounting their personal experiences. Indiana's congressional representatives and senators were invited to attend the various events arranged by the campaign. While Indiana's politicians often could not attend the events, they would at least send their staff members. At certain events, members of the community were joined in face-to-face meetings with their representatives. The story of IndyCAN was also a central fixture at many of these events. During a meeting with Senator Dan Coats, the story of IndyCAN was read as:

IndyCAN was founded in March of 2011 at a gather of over 2,000 people of faith who represent tens of thousands of families across Central Indiana from over 17 faith traditions who came together across race, class, and religious lines based on our shared faith values to build a region of Opportunity for All, which includes violence, expanding career pathways, improving regional mass transit, opening up jobs for the hardest to employ including recently incarcerated, and a pathway to citizenship for 11 million aspiring Americans (IndyCAN n.d.).

The introduction of IndyCAN demonstrates a story of solidarity and cohesiveness as well its goal of creating progressive policy change. It was during these events that IndyCAN

members were asked to share their *testimonios* with the politicians and business leaders. While I go into a more in depth analysis of these events in the following chapter, the importance of the *testimonios* given at each event is important to note. Whether or not the *testimonios* affected the politicians' vote, they were undoubtedly important facets of each Campaign for Citizenship event that I attended.

Depending on the event, *testimonios* sometimes seemed to carry a theme. At the prayer vigil at St. Boniface's Catholic Church, many *testimonios* given were centered on the topics of deportation, fear, and keeping families together. Some five hundred people attended this rally which included several local news stations as well as staff members from the offices of Congressman André Carson, Congresswoman Susan Brooks and Senator Joe Donnelly. Many teenaged Latinos spoke of their uncertain futures should they or their family members face deportation. Some of their *testimonios* recounted their experience of being unable to accept scholarships, earned because of their superb academic performance, because they had no legal status. Indiana's HB1402, passed in May 2011, prevents undocumented children from receiving in-state tuition. Other *testimonios* given reflected immigrants fears of having to return back to their homelands where they economic uncertainty and a lack of resources. Father Tom Walker, parish priest at St. Boniface's Catholic Church recounted his opinions on the importance of the *testimonios* shared at this event:

The rally we had over at St. Boniface's that Sunday we heard the testimonies of the younger immigrants who can't get into college or can't move up or move on because they are being held back because of the whole question of whether they are legal or not, I think those testimonials make it more personal. There are lots of statistics and people saying "well, I knew this person blah blah blah," but when you have personal testimony of someone who has been arrested or deported or attempted to be deported

or can't go to college or has to pay higher tuition and all those kinds of things I think means a lot more than some facts in a newspaper or article.

Father Walker continued to elaborate that the media has a hand in stirring up a “fear of the unknown” when it comes to Latino immigrants. He believes that the *testimonios* given at this event and at other Campaign for Citizenship events can directly address the negative or dehumanizing aspects which the media all too often casts on Latino immigrants. In addition, Father Walker believes that the United States goes through phases in which one group of people are targeted and discriminated against. He elaborated further about the power of *testimonios* by stating:

I think it [sharing *testimonios*] can help because it gives a human face to it. Like I say, when you read it in the paper and you just see these facts and figures it doesn't touch you like the story of somebody who is giving witness to what they've experienced and what they've been through. It's a lot more powerful.

The *testimonios* read at this IndyCAN event mentioned by Father Walker challenged the negative notions of Latino immigrants perpetrated by media outlets. The staff members of the politicians attending the events were asked to share these stories with their politician and reminded them that these immigrants are their constituents. *Testimonios* read at other Campaign for Citizenship events were of equal importance at attempting to show immigrants as having more similarities than differences with the wider American population.

Another prayer vigil was scheduled in a similar fashion set to occur almost two months later at St. Helena's Catholic Church. This time over eight hundred people attended and included Archbishop Tobin and Congressman Carson. Again, *testimonios* were given from Latino youth, the African American community and the white community. Their *testimonios* highlighted a plethora of topics from being unable to

pursue higher education due to Indiana's state-level policies to losing a husband in a raid by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers. Importantly, many of the *testimonios* shared at this event focused on the structural vulnerability experienced by undocumented immigrants in the United States thereby highlighting the need for immigration reform. During the event's conclusion, in front of some eight hundred attendees, Congressman Carson pledged his support of the immigration reform bill.

The sharing of *testimonios* was extremely important at events that took place in smaller events as well. IndyCAN leaders arranged a meeting with local business leaders at the headquarters of Eli Lilly in Indianapolis. There, IndyCAN members came face-to-face with executives of Eli Lilly, Farm Bureau Insurance, and the Indiana Chamber of Commerce as well as staff members from various Indiana politicians. Again, *testimonios* were given that recounted the personal history of the speaker but also included their aspirations. At this meeting, the members of the business community pledged their support for the immigration reform bill. It was hoped that the stories of the immigrants helped influence the support of the business leaders; thereby sending a strong message to the staff members who were representing the politicians.

Finally, *testimonios* were of central prominence when IndyCAN conducted its daily prayer vigils on Monument Circle in Indianapolis. During each visit to Senator Donnelly's office, at least one Latino member of the Campaign for Citizenship was asked to share his or her story with Senator Donnelly's staffers. Their stories would be translated from Spanish to English and centered on their migration journey or the uncertainty they face in the in the United States because of their undocumented status. While Senator Donnelly was unavailable each time a Campaign for Citizenship

delegation went to this office, the members still shared their stories. The members still hoped to have an impact on whoever would be sent to meet with us. In this case, the *testimonio* was used to reach a wider audience and not just the politician whose vote would affect the Latino community. The use of *testimonios* can be an effective means of persuasion whether correcting a false image created by the media or attempting to influence the vote of a politician. While IndyCAN employs the use of *testimonios* as a means to humanize and affect political change, it was importantly stressed to me by several of my interviewees that *testimonios* should be used carefully.

#### *Politicizing Pain or Sharing Stories?*

During my interviews with Latino immigrants, I often asked how they felt about the sharing of *testimonios* with politicians. Sometimes I heard mixed feelings from my interviewees on whether or not *testimonios* should be shared with politicians. While there was a general feeling that it is important to share the *testimonios*, there was apprehension as to whether sharing them was the right thing to do. Arturo Hernández, an assistant at St. Boniface's Catholic Church, explained that sharing *testimonios* should only be supplemental to *la fe en acción* [faith in action – I explore a deeper examination of this term in the following chapter]. When asked whether or not *testimonios* should be shared with politicians, Hernández told me:

*Sí y no...* Yes and no. Yes because I always say in the end, the situation looks concrete in people, in faces, in families. But on the other side, I don't like that pain is politicized. Do you understand? Sometimes we want the pain of the people, to win a vote or gain sympathy. I believe that's part of it, but it's not everything. I believe the fact of giving a *testimonio* to politicians is important, but also, we return to the essential point of IndyCAN, and that is prayer and action.

While Hernández remarked that *testimonios* are an essential part of the strategy of influencing politicians, it cannot be the only strategy. According to him, *testimonios* are not something to be taken lightly and their use should be careful not to politicize the pain that people have experienced. His viewpoint was echoed by other members of IndyCAN as well. Other community members made sure to emphasize that these stories not be exaggerations or fallacies. Javier Torres explained to me that:

*Yo pienso que es bueno [contar los testimonios] pero tiene que ser verdadero ... [algo] que realmente pasó en tu vida y no te lo escuchaste o inventaste, tiene que ser una historia verdadera.*  
[I think that it's (telling *testimonios*) good but it has to be real ... (something) that actually happened in your life and not something you heard or invented, it must be a true story.]

Torres' apprehensions are also echoed in scholarship in which some people that the experiences being told may be intentionally or unintentionally exaggerated (Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodriguez 2012). Despite these apprehensions, *testimonios* are an important part of engaging the Latino community with politicians. These personal histories serve as a means to educate politicians and community leaders who may have no knowledge of immigrant life. However, there are other issues that call into question the use of *testimonios*.

Another Campaign for Citizenship supporter, Claudio Alvarez, also emphasized the importance of not exaggerating the testimonio and that for it to be effective it must come from your own experience. *Si tú cuentas tu experiencia propia es más impactante.* [If you tell your own experience it has more impact]. While his statement agrees with Torres' assertion, Alvarez also explained that some people are afraid to tell their stories, especially if they are undocumented. He described that many undocumented immigrants fear that if they share their stories, they could draw unwanted attention to themselves. I,



too, learned of this fear after attending events with several of members of the Campaign for Citizenship. Some of my undocumented friends were fearful after attending some of the prayer vigils since the local news stations were there videotaping the events. One of my friends explained to me that he was afraid that if his boss saw the news, he might be fired for participating in the event since it could reveal that he is an undocumented immigrant. At each event, undocumented immigrants must decide whether or not they want to risk sharing their stories, use their real names, or appear before the news cameras. While *testimonios* can prove to be an extremely powerful means for moving politicians, there are possible legal implications from sharing them.

At the events I attended, the people who shared *testimonios* seemed to do so in a truthful and dignified manner. The people speaking at events offered the story of their migration journey, their lives, and their dreams. While my interviewees warned that sharing *testimonios* can be problematic, they are also an important part of the political engagement for many Latino immigrants. Sharing *testimonios* is an integral part of IndyCAN's political strategy. Immigrants are able to come face-to-face with politicians and share their stories with them. Although the use of *testimonios* is an important facet of engaging with politicians and community leaders, the sharing of these stories is prominently utilized to garner support and create solidarity among IndyCAN's members.

#### *Uniting the Members of IndyCAN*

*Testimonios* serve extremely important functions within IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship events. At the monthly IndyCAN meetings, which encompass all of the branches of the organization, the members who address the group will share a story about their lives with the group. Additionally, at these monthly meetings members

were asked to turn to the person next to them or behind them and take five minutes each to explain to them something about themselves. Usually, there was a topic to be addressed within these five minutes such as mass transit, immigration reform, family history, interesting story about yourself, and many other topics. Through *testimonios*, IndyCAN members learned a great deal about one another and began to feel connections with other members.

At an IndyCAN meeting in April, I learned the story of a married couple and their child. The wife explained to me how they immigrated to the United States from Mexico. They experienced a lack of economic opportunities and faced high levels of violence from drug gangs which were an ever present danger in the town she and her family were from. In the United States they worked together as a couple to get jobs and create a stable and safe environment for their daughter. Although I did not have a recent story of migration to share with the family, I did tell them how my great grandparents immigrated to the United States from Ireland in the early 1900s in search of better economic opportunities. While there may be over a hundred years difference in the timeframes of our stories, they do overlap in the search for a better life and a better opportunity for future generation.

The story that I heard and the story that I shared served as a means to create a connection between two previous strangers. Now, the immigrant family and I shared a connection with a common history a reason for being in the same space. Many times, members of IndyCAN learned that they too shared a story of immigration. One white supporter of IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship used his family's story as a

motivation to volunteer. George Schultz told me that while to him the stories of the recent immigrants are most important, he shares a common background:

Because it's truly their [immigrants'] story that we need to be hearing from and need to be experiencing. I think maybe it's just a real bottom line for myself is that I have sort of just really appreciated hearing the stories that I didn't really know existed. I have shared my story coming from a European background and the ease that generations ago came to the United States and just to be able to see the kind of struggle that people have on a daily basis because they don't have all the documentation, they don't have all the paper work; so I think it's really important that this is their particularly movement but we're going to be enhanced and blessed in the process.

Schultz is inspired by the stories of the newest immigrants to the United States and finds a connection between them and his ancestors. Archbishop Tobin reiterated the importance of this connection when speaking about the importance of sharing *testimonios* at IndyCAN and Campaign for Citizenship events. The archbishop stated:

I think that within the communities, [the] multicultural community, the story-telling and story-sharing first humanizes the people. They're amazed that people they thought were so different share some of their values, essential values. It gives them a common ground.

Due to the amount of vitriol about undocumented immigration presented in the media and by anti-immigrant groups, *testimonios* serve to reveal that undocumented immigrants and citizens of the United States truly share a common history. Creating a common history or link between groups was also utilized when garnering the support and attendance of participants for the Campaign for Citizenship events.

*Testimonios* were shared between members attending Campaign for Citizenship event-organizing meetings as well. At the start of each meeting, members were asked to share their name, which parish or organization they belong to, as well as one additional piece of information. The last piece varied at every meeting and ranged from a

multiplicity of topics. The short introductions fomented unity and friendship among group members. While these short discussions could be termed as “introductions,” the fact that members were asked to share a short piece about their personal life, beliefs, or feelings moves these discussions in the direction of being more like *testimonios*. Moreover, members of the Campaign for Citizenship were urged to use their *testimonios* in order to garner the support of their fellow community members. When several members expressed the difficulty at getting people to participate in upcoming events, one woman stated that “*los testimonios son importantes compartir con gente que no está segura si puedan asistir los eventos de IndyCAN*” [*testimonios* are important to share with people who are not sure if they can attend IndyCAN events]. She elaborated that sharing your story with community members and asking them to share their story is important. Continuing, she postulated that it very well could be the connection made between this sharing of stories that inspires someone to attend IndyCAN and Campaign for Citizenship events.

Undeniably, *testimonios* serve important functions outside of swaying the vote of political leaders. *Testimonios* have also been used in this manner elsewhere as a means to promote solidarity within groups (Sharp 2004, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008). IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship promote this idea as well that, through diversity, there exists solidarity. In this sense, *testimonios* serve as a glue which binds the multicultural community of IndyCAN together. Utilizing *testimonios* in a means other than to sway politicians demonstrates how these stories serve a much broader purpose than solely as a means to achieve political change.

## *Conclusion*

The sharing of *testimonios* is a vital component for political engagement. IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship utilize *testimonios* by bringing together immigrants in meetings with politicians. Many of my interviewees who belong to the Catholic clergy emphasized the humanizing importance of immigrants' stories. The media and conservative groups may try to play on the negatives of immigration from Latin America and stir up anti-immigrant sentiment through statistics and negative news reports. *Testimonios* provide a unique opportunity to change the hearts and minds of those once opposed. The immigrant, possibly once nothing more than a statistic, is now understood through his or her personal life story, and appears as a human being with the same values and dreams of any other American citizen. Therefore, these stories are used to help change the attitude of politicians and business leaders in Indianapolis and humanize undocumented immigrants. At Campaign for Citizenship events, Latino immigrants and fellow IndyCAN members are able to relate their stories and experiences in hopes of influencing the political process of the United States. While *testimonios* are used in an attempt to change the minds of politicians, they also work to create a sense of unity between the politician and the immigrant. Despite potentially lacking a "legal" status, Latino immigrants are able to engage in the political process and have their stories heard. It is important to note that the use of *testimonios* was met with mixed reaction from several my interviewees. While some were enthusiastic about their use, others were apprehensive and feared that using *testimonios* in this way would politicize people's personal experiences. Still, the use of *testimonios* serves as an important part of IndyCAN's political engagement.

*Testimonios* provide an avenue through which people are able to find a common ground and are used to create solidarity between the members of IndyCAN. Pablo Navaja, an organizer for the Campaign for Citizenship, emphasized the large amount of diversity present in IndyCAN. He also emphasized how *testimonios* often enlighten people on the situation of other people. Once people realize that the differences they perceived about others is almost nonexistent, they come together to forge a stronger bond. *Testimonios* are also employed to garner the support of fellow community members by inspiring others to join with the causes of IndyCAN. Overall, the *testimonio* and its use serve important purposes within IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship. The *testimonio* functions as a means for political engagement while also offering a means to create a foundation from which to build solidarity.

## **Chapter 5**

### ***La Fe en Acción: State Policies, Federal Policies, and Influencing Politicians***

The feeling was tense as we marched in two, side-by-side, single file lines from the Dirksen Senate Office Building to the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C. I had come to Washington D.C. with two fellow members of IndyCAN, Eduardo Quesada and Michael Carter, in order to join with several other members of fellow PICO-affiliated organizations. We joined with members of other state-level grassroots organizations from California, Florida, New Jersey, and Maryland to protest, lobby, and attend the Senate Judiciary Committee markup of the new immigration reform legislation. Following a lunch recess for the senators, the twenty of us PICO members joined with immigration reform organizations to lead a silent protest into the Hart Senate Building. We formed two single file lines; altogether there were approximately sixty of us. Everyone was given a piece of paper with a prayer entitled “The Walls of Jericho.” We were to read this prayer at the end of our demonstration and we were told to remain silent until that point.

We were led by six robed clergy men and women of multiple denominations. We walked in our single file lines, in silence, through a hallway which connected the Dirksen Senate Office Building with the Hart Senate Office Building. When we reached the Hart building, we proceeded to march around a massive statue which was in the center of the atrium. I looked up and counted eight floors of offices rising up. Each window overlooked the atrium and consisted of many senators’ offices. After we were about to complete our first circle around the monument, the clergy held their hands up to halt our procession. The clergy got down on one knee, in prayer, and then stood up and raised one hand in a praying motion. We followed these actions exactly as the clergy and in total silence. We repeated this for two more times, the fourth time we stopped a policeman in a

megaphone told us we were not allowed to kneel and that it was “against the law” since it blocked people from walking through the atrium. Several leaders of the various grassroots organizations went to talk with the six or so police officers who had appeared. I speculated the leaders were trying to negotiate with the police officers to allow our procession to continue uninterrupted. As we neared our fifth pass of the monument, I began to feel a little worried as to whether we should continue to kneel. It seemed that after each pass, more and more police officers were arriving. By now, I counted at least fifteen police officers. I looked at my friend Iván and we both gave a tepid smile in an attempt to reassure one another. However, it was obvious that our smiles came off rather nervously. Iván was an undocumented immigrant in his mid-50s from El Salvador who had come to this PICO event from California. As we came to pass the fifth time, we halted for our prayer but this time the clergy did not kneel. We paused, standing; heads bowed in prayer, lifted our right hand up for several seconds, and continued our silent protest.

As we passed our sixth time, I noticed now that there were now approximately twenty police officers. Several police officers carried large duffel bags which I imagined carried hand restraints to arrest our group if the officers deemed such action to be necessary. Fearing police intervention, I decided I would try to gauge how the police officers felt about this protest. As we passed by two officers, I overheard them debating whether or not one of our clergy was an Episcopalian or a Catholic priest based on his vestments. I felt slightly reassured after hearing this. We continued around the monument a total of nine times. As we completed our final pass, Senator Orrin Hatch who was a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee debating the immigration reform bill, stopped



to watch our protest. One of the clergy gestured to him that we were praying for him. Senator Hatch bowed his head and raised his hand. Our group read the “Walls of Jericho” prayer. Following the prayer our group disbanded and left the building. As I left, I noticed that there were two Spanish language news teams interviewing people as well as one English language news. The following week, the immigration bill was passed out of the markup committee and the debate followed on the Senate floor.

Although this protest happened in Washington, D.C., it is an example of how PICO and its affiliated state branch, IndyCAN, are combining religious faith with political activism. However, “activism” was a word that was shied away from by the organizers and clergy whom I interviewed. Rather the political engagement of the Campaign for Citizenship was referred to as *la fe en acción* [faith in action], activism guided through a social justice interpretation of the bible. This combination of faith and political activism has encouraged the participation of the undocumented Latino immigrant community. Religious faith is always present at the protests and vigils which attempted to engage politicians who are deciding the immigration reform. Throughout this chapter, I argue that *la fe en acción* is a form of activism which the members of the Campaign for Citizenship and IndyCAN use as a means to supersede politics due to its foundation in faith. Aside from *la fe en acción*, the vital presence of Latino leaders have been important to the mobilization of communities through *la fe en acción*.

### *La Fe en Acción*

IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship branch, have acted vehicles through which undocumented Latino immigrants can endeavor to achieve change. Many undocumented Latino immigrants involved in the Campaign see their activism through

the lens of faith which, to them, creates a much stronger and coordinated movement. IndyCAN is organizing events which bring together the undocumented Latino immigrants with major politicians and businesses in the Indianapolis area. Immigrants and supporters of IndyCAN are able to directly lobby their politicians and seek opportunities to meet businesses executives who work at organizations such as Farm Bureau and Eli Lilly and Company. Through IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship, immigrants are becoming more directly involved in the politics that directly affect their lives in Indianapolis.

When asked about the importance of combining faith with activism, several interviewees seemed uncomfortable using the word “activism.” Two of the interviewees explained that they do not believe that activism is the word that correctly describes the work in which they are doing; their “activism” was better described as *la fe en acción* [faith in action]. To them, activism seemed to define a momentary event, done out of emotion, which leaves a rather weak ideology for continuing a struggle such as a pathway to citizenship. Pablo Navaja stated that while activism is a necessary action that is full of passion and immediacy it is “*sin estrategia*” [without strategy]. Arturo Hernández made similar comparisons when discussing activism. According to Hernández, activism is fleeting and only scratches the surface of an issue. Hernández expressed to me that:

*La palabra activismo para mí es algo más político, es algo diferente...Es algo más político, es algo más social.*

[The word activism for me is something more political, it’s something different...It’s something more political, it’s something more social].

Hernández makes the distinction that putting “faith into action” is something more constant and capable of being sustained for longer. Both Navaja and Hernández seem to describe activism as lacking the essential component of religion. Much in the same vein

as liberation theology which embodied a shift in Catholic thought, it developed in Latin America that shifts the emphasis of the Church from the wealthy parishioners to the poor and needy. The move toward liberation theology started in the 1950s and 1960s, although it was named by a Peruvian priest named Gustavo Gutiérrez in his book entitled *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, Salvation* in 1971. While opponents decried liberation theology as having Marxist roots, it has had an undeniable impact on social justice organizing in Latin American and elsewhere. The support of religious institutions lends a certain degree of credibility and offers a moral foundation for organizing.

Religion and social justice often work together through the vehicle of grassroots organizations or through churches (Badillo 2006, Davis *et al.* 2010, Kotin *et al.* 2011). The combination of religion with activism provides a stance that this type of organizing transcends politics.

Hernández emphasized the steadfastness of the Catholic Church to social justice issues and makes the claim that it is better to unite religion with action in place of activism. To him, the Catholic Church has fostered action to achieve social justice issues. Hernández stated:

*La Iglesia [católica] siempre ha sido activa, la Iglesia [católica] siempre ha sido política y la Iglesia [católica] siempre ha luchado por los derechos en las diferentes etapas del ser humano. Entonces, más bien me idea que no aplicaría [la palabra] “activismo” con la religión sino más bien aplicaría la religión con la acción.*

[The [Catholic] Church has always been active, the [Catholic] Church has always been political, and the [Catholic] Church has always fought for rights in different phases of humanity. Then, I think I wouldn't say that the word “activism” goes with religion I would rather say that religion fosters action.]

Reinforcing Hernández' view that the Catholic Church has maintained a social justice oriented mindset; Catholic social teachings were emphasized by the archbishop and other

priests in interviews. These social teachings, especially those post Vatican II and grounded in liberation theology, have put an emphasis on helping the poor and disadvantaged. These teachings play a powerful role in how the church operates from its top down hierarchy to the priests and parishioners with respect to social justice issues. The United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has been a prominent force in attempting to help pass social justice minded legislation, especially concerning immigration. The USCCB and the Catholic Church in the United States has been an important ally to those who are heavily oriented towards social justice issues particularly for immigration reform. IndyCAN's model of organizing engages the religious with the secular as it attempts to influence progressive political change.

Other IndyCAN organizers drew similar designations to explain the differences between *la fe en acción* and activism. Navaja describes that *la fe en acción* produces a means to better organize the community. Navaja explains the difference between activism and *la fe en acción* in a manner similar to Hernández. Navaja states:

*Sí, hay una diferencia entre [el] activismo y organizar a la comunidad...  
Yes, there is a difference between activism and organizing the community.  
Activism for me is lacking strategy. It's quick (and) is done in the  
moment, which is necessary but when we organize the community it's (la  
fe en acción) more effective. It's the idea of how do we organize the  
society in a new way?*

According to Navaja, *la fe en acción* provides a means to organize the community members involved with IndyCAN in a new way. For Navaja, this “new way” of organizing the undocumented Latino immigrant community results in a much stronger and much more steadfast form of activism.

*La fe en acción* also bonds religion together much more strongly to the events that IndyCAN organizes. Since religion is placed at the forefront of any activism carried out

at any IndyCAN or Campaign for Citizenship events, religion takes the focus away from the political nature of the activism conducted by the campaign. Navaja goes as far as to say that *la fe en acción* is God's will. He mentioned the Lord's Prayer and stated "*hágase su voluntad hacía en la tierra como en el cielo*" [thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven]. Believing that it is God's will that a pathway to citizenship be created by politicians is a strong belief to have while campaigning for citizenship. This belief is also held by many of the New Sanctuary Movement groups who feel that U.S. policies and corporations foment and perpetuate that situation that causes the influx of migration (Oxford 2010, Gálvez 2010). Additionally, these groups feel that this type of activism is a "greater commandment" than U.S. immigration policy (Oxford 2010). This type of thinking is again indicative of liberation theology and its emphasis on putting more emphasis on the rights of the poor and disadvantaged. Furthering his statement, Navaja stated:

*Entonces, para mí, es la idea de la fe, cuando la ponemos en acción, estamos haciendo lo que Dios nos dice. Así realmente es nuestra misión como ser humanos.*

[Then, to me, it's the idea of faith, when we put it into action we are doing what God tells us. Thus it's truly our mission as human beings.]

This is a belief that is also shared among other grassroots organizations throughout the country. In other cities such as Los Angeles, participants in the churches and organizations believe that immigration and immigration policy is a matter that exceeds the church or the nation and is completely up to God to decide (Matovina 2001, Oxford 2010, Gálvez 2010, Kotin *et al.* 2011). During an interview with PICO's Washington, D.C. Campaign for Citizenship manager, Eddie Carmona, he revealed how religion serves as a link between the church and state. Carmona stated that:

When we [PICO] show up at Senate Judiciary Committee markup and we do an opening prayer they [the politicians] can relate to that, they see that [the praying] and they don't see that we're protesting but instead we're lifting up prayers and we're asking them to do the right thing for our families because we're a people of faith.

Additionally, Carmona believes that religion and prayer allows politicians to consider legislation from their religious background instead of their political partisan. Carmona also stated "I think it [prayer] allows the opportunity for elected officials to exercise their faith and be cognizant of their faith values as they tackle this immigration issue."

Carmona explained to me that PICO is able to bring the "faith voice to the fight" which sets PICO aside from the grassroots organizations that do not base their activism in religious faith. IndyCAN follows this model when pursuing social justice issues pertinent to the residents of Indianapolis. Prayer functions a ritual through which immigrants can request divine intervention in the passage of an immigration reform bill. Prayer is also a key ritual at all IndyCAN and Campaign for Citizenship events. At many events, politicians and community leaders, regardless of their political alignment, were invited to join with IndyCAN members in prayer in an attempt foster unity among those praying but also to effect political change. Prayer is one ritual that organizations like IndyCAN create a foundation of faith in order to organize communities to influence local and national politics.

### *Building Leaders in the Community*

In addition to the social justice issues pursued by IndyCAN, the organization is also working at building leaders within the community. Shoshanna Spector, the executive director of IndyCAN, explained that "many of the people involved in IndyCAN have never been involved in public life or are afraid to speak at mass, let alone, find

themselves negotiating with the mayor. It's pretty impressive steps that people have taken." Furthermore, Spector elaborated that IndyCAN "is dedicated to building leadership within folks that don't normally have access to the levers of power." Through the various branches of IndyCAN, residents of Indianapolis are engaging in local and national politics when they might have previously felt unable to. In this way, IndyCAN is mobilizing residents of low-income communities, undocumented immigrants, and persons who were previously incarcerated. Within the Latino community, the Campaign for Citizenship is developing leaders of all ages. IndyCAN has been effective at developing leadership among the youth of the Latino community, many of whom are DREAMers. The Latino youth, the overwhelming majority of whom are bilingual, have been instrumental in uniting the white and Latino communities according to several clergy.

Developing leadership from within has been an important feature prominent throughout Latino dominated churches as well (Báez *et al.* 2009:197). Leadership roles lend a sense of empowerment for those involved in those positions. Leadership roles can also offer inclusiveness especially to undocumented Latino immigrants who see their position as a source of importance and acceptance in a broader environment that often sees them as holding an inferior position in society (Kotin *et al.* 2011). Of important emphasis was the ability for Latino youth, because of their fluency in both English and Spanish, to unite the white and Latino communities. Sister Elizabeth Campbell of St. Daniel's Catholic Church commented that "even within their group, the Hispanic and the English, especially the ones who are bilingual, have become leaders, real leaders even with the English speaking community." The emphasis on the development of leadership,

particularly from within adolescents, who are classified as DREAMers, was also stressed in an interview with Archbishop Joseph Tobin who stated that:

You have different levels of commitment; particularly articulate are the so called DREAMers. The Latinos who entered here as young people but have grown up pretty much with a strong American influence. You hear them speak the language and you wouldn't know they were born in Mexico or Guatemala or some other place. And they're perfectly bilingual; they can shift back and forth.

Growing up between two cultures, the culture of their parents and the culture of the United States have granted these Latino youth the ability to fit within both cultures. In many of the event planning meetings for IndyCAN it was the Latino youth, between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, who would spearhead the different subgroups in preparation for an upcoming event. Such an active leadership from within the Latino community is particularly important according to Father Tom Walker, priest at St. Daniel's Catholic Church, who believes that this immigration movement should be led from within the community and not a clergy led movement. Father Walker emphasized that while it is important for priests to be visible at the events, it means much more for the people themselves to unite and lead the movement. His views are echoed in immigrant rights movements in other areas of the United States. In Chicago, for example, research has revealed that the Latino community leaders are more knowledgeable about the policies and the movement itself than are the priests (Davis *et al.* 2010). The most important function of the priests is to serve as visible and vocal supporters in the immigrant rights movement.

The important emphasis on the development of leaders demonstrates that Latinos in Indianapolis and around the United States are, in fact, not a powerless population. Latinos are fully aware of their situation and are exercising their agency in deciding what



political issues are important in addition to what needs to be done to improve their situation. Speaking of his time at his previous parish in Indianapolis, Father Tom Walker commented on their resourcefulness within the church by stating:

I can say in the fourteen years I was there, I've seen a tremendous change in terms of people taking charge and creating retreat programs like Christ Renews His Parish, marriage preparation programs, and retreats and all these kinds of things that weren't there before. Those were all developed because they saw a need and they said "just give us the resources or help us to do this and we'll do it."

He has also seen a great deal of participation in his old parish and the parish he has recently taken over. Through participation in the church and in IndyCAN, undocumented Latino immigrants in Indianapolis overcome stereotypes placed upon them by the media and their structural vulnerability enacted through policy. IndyCAN provides a means to disseminate information about current laws and politicians to the community. These leaders can relay this information to the volunteers and keep them informed of the current stances of Indiana's politicians and current legislation. Latino community leaders in the Campaign for Citizenship are important especially in mobilizing their communities to meet with politicians.

### *Influencing Politicians*

All branches of IndyCAN are engaging with politicians and building relationships between people, religious institutions, businesses, and state and federal politicians. When my participation in the Campaign for Citizenship began in February of 2013, there was a major focus on gaining the support of Indiana's newly elected Democratic senator Joe Donnelly. I participated in several meetings in which a core group of between fifteen and twenty Campaign for Citizenship members and I would organize and develop different events in an attempt to garner the support of Senator Donnelly. During a meeting with

IndyCAN members, Senator Donnelly emphasized that he wanted to see support for the bill not only from religious institutions but from businesses and other politicians as a way to show a more diversified approach for supporting the bill. Events organized by IndyCAN typically consisted of phone banks, prayer vigils at churches, and prayer vigils at Monument Circle in Indianapolis. These events were an effective means to make a statement from the faith community of Indianapolis to the politicians deciding the fate of immigration reform.

One strategy for gaining Donnelly's support was through phone banks. A usual assignment for each member was to call Donnelly's office and leave a message that "you want Donnelly to come out in public support of a pathway to citizenship." After making the call, IndyCAN leaders expected you to request five or more of your friends to call asking for the Senator's public support. At various points before the U.S. Senate's vote on the bill, phone banks were set up in which IndyCAN members volunteered in order to call people requesting their support of Senate bill 744. Different parishes organized teams and would run phone banks for a few hours on different nights. However, volunteers often voiced frustration at the lack of support and, sometimes, apathy of the callers. At an organizing meeting in early June, one member stated that out of three hundred calls, only one hundred would answer, and only thirty would say they would support this cause. The member further stated that it might be more effective to get people whom we actually know to call Donnelly's office since we can never be really sure that those thirty people would actually make the call.

Another difficulty arose due to the issue of language. Donnelly's office only accepted messages left in English so many calls could not be made unless the caller had

someone who could translate the message into English. This disparity is an example of structural vulnerability (Chavez 1998, Quesada *et al.* 2011, Holmes 2013) as Latino immigrants are denied a means to improve their situation since they are unable to leave messages. While Quesada *et al.* (2011) apply the concept of structural vulnerability to the cultural barriers that block immigrants from receiving health care, structural vulnerability also has a direct correlation in situations in which immigrants cannot exercise political rights to improve their situation. This requirement that messages be left in English sets up a means to exclude the opinions of a group of people residing in the United States. Despite this, the Campaign for Citizenship continued to use this method to reach large sections of the various politicians of Indiana.

Perhaps the most effective strategy to move politicians was through prayer vigils. Many prayer vigils were arranged at churches during the course of my fieldwork. Importantly, organizers were apt to disassociate prayer vigils from such terminology as “protests” or “activism.” Fliers and press releases for prayer vigils never mentioned such words. Thus, the Campaign for Citizenship was aligning itself more closely with *la fe en acción* and not activism. I have discussed several prayer vigils throughout the course of this thesis. Some prayer vigils only had fifteen to twenty participants while others had over eight hundred participants. The first large prayer vigil I attended during the course of my fieldwork occurred in March of 2013 at St. Boniface’s Catholic Church.

I arrived at St. Boniface’s Catholic Church at 8:40 a.m. The weather in the morning was brisk but supposed to be warming up later in the day for the scheduled prayer vigil. As I walked through the parking lot, I noticed a local network news affiliate van had already been here to start covering the story. I also took note of a parked police

car. One police officer was standing outside the car, leaning in and conversing with the officer in the driver's seat. I speculated why their presence was necessary, especially since I was one of the first people to arrive. I was wary that if the police remained in the parking lot for too long, it might dissuade some IndyCAN members from attending the prayer vigil.

It was Sunday and, although the vigil was scheduled for today, PICO training had been going on since Friday. I had been unable to attend the previous two days but learned that one news affiliate had been very interested in covering the entire three day event. I learned that at least two more local news affiliates would be coming to cover the event. I walked into the church gymnasium and met with several other Campaign for Citizenship members. Within the next thirty minutes the gymnasium began to fill up with supporters. The first half of the day consisted of a training session by PICO members who had flown in from Washington, D.C. At approximately 11:45 a.m., the supporters went to attend Sunday Mass and I went with several other Campaign for Citizenship supporters to help distribute signs for a short demonstration march. As the church emptied around 1 p.m., parishioners took signs and marched to a park adjacent to the church where a stage and microphone had been set up.

Chants of “*¡Obama! ¡Escucha! ¡Estamos en la lucha!*” [Obama! Listen! We're in the fight! (for immigration reform)] and “Education, not deportation!” were shouted as we marched to the church park. Reporters from two other local news affiliates recorded the event and one newspaper reporter came to cover the event. At the park, the priest spoke about the pressing need for immigration reform. His speech was followed by several undocumented Latino immigrants who voiced the daily struggles they and their

families face due to their undocumented status. These *testimonios* were meant not only to share with the other supporters but for the staff members of several of Indiana's politicians who had come to in place of the politician. After the event, I learned that almost five hundred people attended the prayer vigil that day.



Prayer Vigil at St. Boniface's Catholic Church. Photo by Ryan I. Logan.

The prayer vigil at St. Boniface's Catholic Church and the other prayer vigils mentioned throughout this thesis illustrate how *la fe en acción* is an enactment of activism. These prayer vigils organized by the Campaign for Citizenship demonstrates how this enactment of *la fe en acción* is used to foment political change through the use of prayer and *testimonios* in an attempt to sway political opinion. Despite the fact that none of Indiana's politicians attended this event, these large manifestations demonstrate the unity and commitment to political change that Indianapolis' undocumented immigrant community is dedicated to bringing about. While *la fe en acción* is a powerful mover for some undocumented immigrants, to others it is not enough. After the event, one of my

friends and an undocumented Latino immigrant voiced his concern about his presence at the event. He told me that he feared if he was included in a picture for the news report that his boss may fire him. While my friend still supports the Campaign for Citizenship, he did not attend anymore prayer vigils after St. Boniface's event for the duration of my fieldwork. The structural vulnerability of his position as an undocumented immigrant hindered his involvement in future events. Despite the risk of participating in *la fe en acción*, many undocumented Latino immigrants are still coming out of the shadows in Indianapolis to push politicians to support immigration reform.

#### *Pressing Indiana's House Representatives*

Once the Senate approved the bill in late June of 2013, there was not much time to debate the bill in the House of Representatives before the August recess. IndyCAN was quick to mobilize and generate new ideas about how to press Indiana's representatives. Seven of the nine state representatives are Republicans and are likely to vote along party lines in regards to the vote on S.744. With the publicly announced support of Democratic Representative André Carson and the yes vote of Indiana's other Democratic Representative, Peter Visclosky, IndyCAN turned their focus to Republican Representative Susan Brooks. While many of IndyCAN members are not constituents of Representative Brooks, her district does include St. Daniel's Catholic Church. St. Daniel's is one of the largest parishes in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and also an important center of mobilization for IndyCAN. Discussions about how to move the parishioners and how to move Representative Brooks on the immigration issue were begun in early July 2013.

Much of the pressure on Susan Brooks was similar to the pressure placed on Senator Joe Donnelly. IndyCAN wanted to demonstrate to Susan Brooks that immigration reform is beyond partisan politics and that her vote decides the fate of families of “aspiring Americans.” The volunteers for the Campaign for Citizenship wanted to appeal to Congresswoman Brooks as a person and not as a politician. In this way, the Campaign for Citizenship hoped to circumvent a political argument and humanize the position of undocumented immigrants. Additionally, the campaign attempted to separate Brooks from the vitriol of opponents of immigration reform and connect her with undocumented immigrants and their families. The members of the Campaign for Citizenship began making preparations for an *acción publica* [public action] to educate Brooks on their issues of immigration reform and the immigrants themselves.

The last event I attended for my fieldwork occurred in September of 2013 at St. Daniel’s Catholic Church and was a prayer vigil to bring together Congresswoman Brooks with the supporters of the Campaign for Citizenship. Summer had extended its reach into September, the temperature was extremely hot on this Sunday afternoon. The meeting was held in the gymnasium of St. Daniel’s and, similar to the other events, filled up quickly. The meeting with the congresswoman followed the similar formula for the previous events. There was a large audience; close to five hundred people attended the meeting. The congresswoman was seated up front, facing the audience and the podium. Several priests and several undocumented immigrants addressed the audience and the congresswoman and expressed the urgency of immigration reform. The speakers pressed

Congresswoman Brooks to announce her public support for immigration reform and asked that she try to influence her Republican colleagues to support the bill as well.



Congresswoman Susan Brooks (at the podium, on the left) meeting with members the Campaign for Citizenship. Photo by Ryan I. Logan.

While the congresswoman addressed the audience, she largely explained that the House of Representatives was debating the bill and would likely be splitting the bill into multiple pieces of legislation. Despite the fact that Brooks' support seems unlikely at the moment, IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship viewed the event as a victory since it brought the congresswoman together with its members. The congresswoman is a Catholic and she declined to announce any form of public support for the senate bill which, as of the completion of this thesis, is still up for debate in the House of Representatives. However, in her closing statements, Brooks stated that, as a Catholic, she will remember the stories that were shared and do what can to advocate for fixing the immigration system. *La fe en acción* may not be enough to overcome partisan politics but



it is working to engage undocumented Latino immigrants in a political system which refuses to grant them a legal status.

### *Conclusion*

State and federal policies aimed at trammeling the advancement of undocumented immigrant populations have caused immigrants to take hold of their situation in an attempt to improve it. In Indianapolis, undocumented Latino immigrants have come together through the Campaign for Citizenship and IndyCAN which act as a vehicle to achieve progressive political change. IndyCAN and its members enact a form of activism called *la fe en acción* which offers a means to supersede partisan politics and press politicians to pass legislation based on religious faith and human dignity. While phone banks offer one way to attempt to sway politicians, prayer vigils are an important form of activism which brings together the undocumented Latino immigrant community with politicians who are making legislation regarding their everyday lives.

Prayer vigils are important in mobilizing a large amount of the Latino immigrant community, whether documented or undocumented, and connect them with Indiana's politicians. These prayer vigils place religion at the forefront of the political nature of this activism. Placing religion at the forefront distances the political nature of these protests and grounds this activism in religious faith. Smaller scale prayer vigils such as those carried out in the Hart Senate building in Washington, D.C. and at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Indianapolis, illustrate how Latino immigrants are engaging in the political process in the United States. Large scale prayer vigils such as those carried out at St. Boniface's and St. Daniel's exemplify how the Latino community in Indianapolis is

able to mobilize and engage with politicians and the media to advocate for their social justice needs.

The development of community leaders has been a critical component in bringing the various communities which participate in IndyCAN together to participate in prayer vigils and other political events for IndyCAN. Especially the young leader leaders who are fluent in Spanish and English have been able to mobilize members of the Latino, white, and African American communities in various parishes. IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship utilize a variety of means to influence politicians. *La fe en acción* is a form of activism which attempts to supersede the realm of political activism through a foundation of faith. While *la fe en acción* is a powerful means to organize in Indianapolis, it cannot always overcome the notions of structural vulnerability or partisan politics. IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship continue to organize around *la fe en acción* as this organization carries out events to sway the vote of Indiana's politicians. Through the enactment of *la fe en acción*, prayer, and prayer vigils politicians are asked to act upon their faith values rather than their political ideals.

## **Conclusion**

The work being done by the members of IndyCAN and its branches exemplifies unity and cohesiveness in Indianapolis. Volunteers working specifically in the Campaign for Citizenship branch of IndyCAN are made up of primarily Latinos as well as documented and undocumented immigrants. Despite lacking a “legal status” many undocumented Latino immigrants in Indianapolis are still willing to advocate for their rights through the vehicle of grassroots organizations such as IndyCAN. Grassroots organizing centered on religious faith blurs the line between the religious and the secular as well as the separation of church and state. IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship seek to highlight the contradiction between the Constitution and current immigration policies thereby imploring for the passage of new immigration reform. With the support of religious institutions, undocumented immigrants are able to resist the structural policies which put them at a disadvantage. Undocumented immigrants can draw on their religious faith as an enactment of activism to resist their structural vulnerability.

The evidence I collected demonstrates that Latinos in Indianapolis are identifying topics pertinent to their needs and are organizing around their religion and IndyCAN. Additionally, IndyCAN has focused on developing leaders within the communities of Indianapolis. These leaders in the Latino community, including many young leaders, are mobilizing their people and are attempting to bridge the gap between their community with the white and African American communities. These leaders are also importantly connecting members of their communities with politicians as well as business and community leaders in order to share their stories and experiences. In this way, the

undocumented Campaign for Citizenship volunteers are directly engaging in a political process that seeks to keep them out of the American political system.

Religion plays an important role by laying a foundation from which grassroots organizations draw inspiration and justification in order to mobilize. Catholic and Protestant clergy are active in the social justice issues in Indianapolis and offer vocal and visible support. Even though clergy are present at various IndyCAN events, they emphasized that these movements should be driven by community leaders and not from the clergy. Their supportive position allows for community members to exercise their agency within the branches of IndyCAN. The archbishop of the Indianapolis archdiocese echoed this idea in his telling of Good Samaritan in which the Church should “check in” on the government in order to make sure it is taking care of its citizens. IndyCAN works closely with its national affiliate, PICO, and employs many strategies such as prayer vigils, phone banks, and community outreach. IndyCAN and PICO implore politicians to add a moral dimension in their political decisions and not purely follow party lines. Religion provides a framework of morality from which many grassroots organizations are able to mobilize communities and work toward political change. Parallels are drawn between IndyCAN and the Civil Rights Movement as religion is employed as a base to inspire political activism.

The current state of politics in the United States regarding immigration and policies towards undocumented immigrants is fraught with structural violence. Undocumented immigrants face economic uncertainty in their homeland and seek employment in the United States. All of the immigrants I interviewed came to the United States seeking better opportunity for themselves and their families. Several state and

national groups have been attempting to define what an “American” is based along perceptions of race. These groups, along with conservative politicians, are combining race with citizenship and exclude immigrants from attaining citizenship. Despite suggestions that the United States is in a post-racial era, racialized language such as “illegal” and “alien” are turning Latinos into a racial group. This racialized language reveals the embeddedness of race and ethnicity in the immigration debate. Some undocumented immigrants remain apprehensive about the passage of immigration reform due to particular parts of the bill which would make the pathway to citizenship much more arduous to attain for many immigrants. While there is uncertainty among some immigration reform supporters, many are relying on their faith values and continued progress to work towards comprehensive immigration reform. Despite exclusionary attitudes and policies, undocumented Latino immigrants have found opportunity in the United States. These immigrants are willing to organize through faith-based activism to engage in the political process and tell their stories to policy makers.

*Testimonios* serve a prominent role in the organizing work conducted by IndyCAN. Throughout their history *testimonios* distribute information and work to inspire people and communities. Despite the personal nature of many of these stories, they are meant to be shared to invoke feelings and emotions. *Testimonios* importantly serve to humanize undocumented Latino immigrants whom are often vilified in the media. Often, they serve as a rallying call to correct a social ill of society. IndyCAN utilizes *testimonios* and emphasizes that everyone has a story to tell. These stories serve to unite and foster solidarity among the members of IndyCAN. These personal witnesses were often the center piece of the events I attended and were utilized in a means to sway

the minds of politicians. Although the *testimonios* are powerful narratives, some IndyCAN members were unsure of their use and stressed that these stories should not be exaggerated for personal gain. Likewise, others voiced concern that these experiences were being used to politicize suffering. Despite this, *testimonios* are being used as a means to convey shared experiences and with the hope of opening the minds of politicians and community leaders.

In Indianapolis, the political participation of Latinos as well as documented and undocumented immigrants is growing. IndyCAN is fostering the growth and development of leaders within the Latino community. Of particular importance are the youth, who were lauded in my interviews by Catholic clergy. The clergy found them to be key motivators in both the Latino and white community. Undocumented Latino immigrants and other Latinos are motivated not to participate in “activism” but rather *la fe en acción* [faith in action]. *La fe en acción* provides the participants with an added dimension of religious faith. I argue that *la fe en acción* is an enactment of activism, similar to how *testimonios* and prayer are utilized, which allows for religion to be present at political events and attempts to appeal to the faith values of politicians. In this way, IndyCAN utilizes *la fe en acción*, *testimonios*, and prayer as political strategies in an attempt to effect political change. As IndyCAN has grown in size through its outreach and engagement in the community through events, it has met with many political representative and business leaders.

As a grassroots organization, IndyCAN has experienced an assortment of successes and failures throughout its branches. Among the major successes in the Campaign for Citizenship are Senator Donnelly’s “yes” vote on immigration reform,

Congressman Carson's support, and gaining the support of Eli Lilly and Company as well as several other prominent businesses. However, Senator Coats' "no" vote and with Congresswoman Brooks likely "no" vote on immigration reform illustrate how IndyCAN's grassroots activism sometimes fall short. Even out of failures come successes. IndyCAN continues to expand. Additionally, increasing numbers of undocumented and document immigrants and other Indianapolis residents are coming out to support IndyCAN based on shared religious faith and common political aspirations. By participating in a grassroots organization, marginalized populations can circumvent their structurally vulnerable position and attempt to influence the very policies which enact their structural vulnerability.

At the time of the completion of this thesis, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 (S.744) is still awaiting decision in the House of Representatives. IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship have continued to reach out to Congresswoman Brooks. Whether S.744 is ultimately successful or not, it is undeniable that IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship have been able to help craft leaders who seek to engage with politicians and community leaders in Indianapolis. IndyCAN is serving as the vehicle through which community organizing is possible. Furthermore, undocumented Latino immigrants are actively participating in the political process and are making an impact in local and national politics. As an engaged anthropologist, I offered my support as a volunteer by helping to organize events, work with the media, and attend events. I hope that this thesis will prove useful to IndyCAN and the Campaign for Citizenship as I have documented and analyzed almost a year of community organizing which targeted S.744. Regardless of the future of

the bill, the future of Indianapolis' Latino community is that of solidarity and unity as it continues to grow through active participation in IndyCAN.



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## CURRICULUM VITAE

Ryan Iffland Logan

### **Education**

Master of Arts, Applied Anthropology, 2014  
Indiana University

Bachelor of Arts, Anthropology, 2012  
Indiana University

### **Honors and Awards**

Sam H. Jones Scholarship for Community Service, 2013

IUPUI Graduate Assistantship in Anthropology, 2013-2014

IUPUI's RISE (Research, International, Service, or Experiential learning) Challenge on Bachelor's Degree, completed Service and Experiential learning sections through independent research projects in fulfillment of two of the four RISE areas

Anthropology Academic Achievement Award, 2012

William M. Plater Civic Engagement Medallion, 2012

### **Research and Training Experience**

Advanced proficiency in Spanish

### **Presentations**

Presented "*Cuando Actuamos, Actuamos Juntos*": Understanding the Intersections of Religion, Activism, and Citizenship within the Latino Community of Indianapolis at IUPUI Research Day, Indianapolis, IN, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

Presented "*Cuando Actuamos, Actuamos Juntos*": Understanding the Intersections of Religion, Activism, and Citizenship within the Latino Community of Indianapolis at the Central States Anthropological Society, Normal, IL, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

Panelist in a session entitled "Reading at the Table: The Neighborhood of Saturdays," at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

Presented “Community Health Workers and Their Importance in Immigrant Communities,” at Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Panelist at the book launch of “The Neighborhood of Saturdays: Memories of a Multiethnic Neighborhood on Indianapolis’ Southside,” Jewish Community Center (JCC), Indianapolis, IN, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Presented “The Catholic Church and Latino Immigrants in Indianapolis: The Immigrant Experience at St. Philip Neri Catholic Church,” Bachelor of Arts senior thesis at the Butler Undergraduate Research Conference 2012, Indianapolis, IN, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Presented “Sushi in Cultural Perspectives” at the Food in Bloom Conference at Indiana University, June 2010

### **Conferences Attended**

Central States Anthropological Society (CSAS) Annual Conference, Normal, IL; 2014

American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Conference, Chicago, IL; 2013

Food in Bloom Conference, Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition (SAFN), Bloomington, IN; 2010

### **Publications**

Research contributor for Chapter 6: “‘That Was My Job Then’: Employment and Labor,” published in:

Hyatt, Susan B.; Linder, Benjamin J.; and Margaret Baurley  
2012 Neighborhood of Saturdays: Memories of a Multiethnic Community on Indianapolis’ Southside. Dog Ear Publishing: Indianapolis.

Essay entitled “Telling Their Story: Response to Wolowic,” published in:

Hyatt, Susan; Castro Madariaga, Marcela; Baurley, Margaret; Dagon, Molly J.; Logan, Ryan; Waxingmoon, Anne; and David Plasterer  
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